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BEYOND ABRAHAMISM

A fresh reading of the Tanakh traditions respecting
Lot, Moab and Ammon

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BEYOND ABRAHAMISM

submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

is the result of my own research, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis, in whole or in part has not been submitted for an award, including a higher degree, to any other university or institution.


Signed: [Signature Redacted by Library]

Date: 27 July 1999
The most powerful acts of resistance are often those where the first lesson is to resist oneself.

David Tracy
AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

At the heart of this study is my interest in the way in which a religious community establishes its sense of identity and its boundaries in relation to other groups. I explore the case of Israel's attitude towards her eastern neighbours, the Moabites and Ammonites, as portrayed in Tanakh, the Hebrew Bible. Most commentary from the last one hundred years privileges one particular view of Moab and Ammon as traditional enemies of Israel. I aim to show the validity of readings of the biblical accounts that reveal a more complex relationship between Israel and her neighbours. Tanakh exhibits a dialectic between eirenic and hostile viewpoints.

The stories of Abraham and Lot, who are presented as ancestors of Israel and of Moab and Ammon, to some degree represent Israel's understanding of her neighbours. Conventional commentaries take for granted the accepted orthodoxy of Judaism, Christianity and Islam concerning Abraham and his significance in terms of faith and righteousness and blessing and covenant. As none of these notions is specifically linked to Lot at any point, he is treated as a pathetic figure and remains secondary in conventional commentary. Many commentaries denigrate the character of Lot, often in direct comparisons with Abraham. My reading of the texts of Genesis attempts to free the story of Lot from the constraints imposed by the way the story of Abraham functions. A careful reading of the Genesis account shows that Lot and Abraham exhibit similar elements of moral ambiguity, and Genesis contains no statement that condemns Lot on moral or religious grounds.

Genesis 19, the single narrative in which Lot appears independently of Abraham, participates in the dialectic elsewhere in Tanakh. On the basis of a consistent pattern of action and speech throughout the first portion of Genesis 19, I advance my own original conception of the eirenic viewpoint of the narrator concerning Lot and his relationship to the divine. I attempt to demonstrate ways in which the story of Lot critiques or deconstructs the dominant ideology centred upon Abraham. My conception of the particular interests of the compiler of Genesis 19 is supported by several intertextual studies. These include the traditions of Sodom and of Zoar, the story of hospitality in Judges 19, the story of the deluge (Genesis 6-9) and stories of women who, like Lot's daughters, act to continue the family line.
In a treatment of the history of Lot traditions, I find evidence to separate the story of Lot from the work of the Yahwist. I consider whether the stories of Lot have a derivation east of the Jordan and whether the stories were of particular interest to the Deuteronomists.

In the final chapter of this study, I focus on the main themes of the narratives concerning Lot and Abraham, and Moab and Ammon and Israel. The question of social boundaries arises in regard to many of these themes, such as the interaction of female and male, the role of wealth, the relation of city and country, kinship, and rights to land settlement. In this way, the treatment of Lot and Abraham in Tanakh and in subsequent traditions offers a perspective upon the formation of identity in the contemporary world of religious plurality.
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HEBREW TRANSLITERATION

Throughout the text of this thesis, references to Hebrew terms are expressed by transliteration in English letters, according to the following scheme. An underline of the letters b, g, d, k, p and t indicates the soft form of each of these letters.

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It has not been necessary to distinguish the short and long vowels except in the case of the following full vowels formed from consonants.

| ê               | י. šerec       | Ũ               | י holem      |
| i               | י hireq        | Ũ               | י šureq      |
ABBREVIATIONS

ABD  Anchor Bible Dictionary
ABR  Australian Biblical Review
ACEBT Amsterdamse Cahiers voor Exegese en Bijbelse Theologie
ADAJ Annual of the Dept. of Antiquities of Jordan
BA   The Biblical Archaeologist
BAR  Biblical Archaeology Review
BTB  Biblical Theology Bulletin
BZ   Beiheft, Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ  Catholic Biblical Quarterly
Dtr  Deuteronomistic History
JANES Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Studies
JB   Jerusalem Bible
JBL  Journal of Biblical Literature
JES  Journal of Ecumenical Studies
JETS Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JJS  Journal of Jewish Studies
JNES Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JPS  Jewish Publication Society of America
JSOT Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSOT Supp. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament; Supplementary series
JTS  Journal of Theological Studies
LXX  Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible)
MT   Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible
NRSV The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
OTL  Old Testament Library
Pirqe R. El. The commentary: Pirqe Rabbi Eliezer
SBL  Society of Biblical Literature
SCM  Student Christian Movement Press
TB   Tractates of the Babylonian Talmud
VT   Vetus Testamentum
ZAW  Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
PREFACE

In an earlier thesis, I examined the traditions regarding Abraham that are found in the scriptures of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Although the figure of Abraham has considerable potential as a unifying symbol for adherents of these religions, this potential is greatly circumscribed by the disparate claims these religions have made about Abraham in order to legitimate their differing ideologies.

An alternative symbol of human solidarity appears in the figure of Lot, a kinsman of Abraham. As one outside of the covenant but yet delivered by divine mercy, Lot can be seen to represent the potential access of every individual to the divine. His story also embodies the ambiguity and ambivalence of human nature. On both accounts, the figure of Lot surpasses the capacity of the idealised figure of Abraham as a symbol of human existence. From this perspective, my reading of the stories of Lot and of the nations of Moab and Ammon descended from him engages issues of concern to the contemporary individual as well as those relevant to a particular faith community living in a pluralistic context alongside others.

I wish to acknowledge the faculty of Colgate Rochester Divinity School, Rochester, New York, who first inspired my fascination with biblical languages and traditions. I am also grateful for the teaching experience I shared with the faculty and students of Rarongo Theological College, Papua New Guinea, which inspired me to take up this research project.

As at earlier points in my vocational journey, I am again indebted to the Rev. Harold Pidwell, presently Dean of Melbourne College of Divinity. He directed my attention to the resources of Deakin University and to the sympathetic attention of Prof. Ian Weeks who first advocated for my candidacy. I am also grateful to Prof. Bryan Turner of Deakin University and Prof. Mark Brett of Whitley College for their supervision and encouragement. I have hardly begun to comprehend the wealth of knowledge and perspective they have offered me.

I have especially valued the challenge of pursuing an essentially biblical study in the context of a secular university, with the support of an Australian Postgraduate Award. This project has also been sustained through my pastoral employment in various congregations of the Uniting Church. The people of
Lilydale Uniting Church graciously adapted ministry settlement terms to accommodate my studies. It has been enormously enlightening to enter into the discourse on postmodernism and to ponder the critique this discourse gives of one's situation within the ministry of the church. My reading of the story of Lot illustrates the diversity of tradition and ideology in the bible. Such a reading supports the conception of a local church congregation as a community in which a diversity of understanding and expression is both accepted and welcomed.

Thank you especially to my family members, Gillian, and James, Bevan and Nicola for patience with me and this project over these years.
INTRODUCTION

1. Key perspectives for this study

At the heart of this study is my interest in the way in which a religious community establishes its sense of identity and its boundaries in relation to other groups, and how this is expressed in the scriptures of that community. A great portion of texts in Tanakh (the Hebrew Bible) bear on this issue as it concerned the people of ancient Israel.1 I have chosen to explore as an example the case of Israel's eastern neighbours, the Moabites and Ammonites, who appear frequently in the historiography of Israel from the period of settlement through to exile. This is a fruitful study because although Tanakh reports that Moab and Ammon were closely linked to Israel in a kinship relation, and records show that they spoke a dialect similar to Hebrew, they reportedly worshipped a different god. I show that, contrary to conventional biblical commentary, Tanakh exhibits a dialectic between eirenic and hostile viewpoints of Israel towards Moab and Ammon, sometimes reflecting the similarities between Israel and her neighbours and sometimes the differences. I also provide an original interpretation of the Genesis story of Lot, presented as the ancestor of Moab and Ammon, which I believe participates in the dialectic elsewhere in Tanakh.

An outline of this study follows below, preceded by an introduction to the relevant ancient texts, to the subsequent commentaries, and to the postmodern viewpoint I engage in my reading.

Ancient texts

My study of Israel's relationships with Moab and Ammon treats texts from many of the books in Tanakh. References to these relationships occur sporadically throughout the canon, beginning with the story of Israel's arrival on the Plains of Moab, east of the Jordan River, following their exodus from Egypt (Numbers 21). Interaction with Ammon (along with Moab) is first noted in the battle

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1 Walter Brueggemann, in his introduction to Genesis (1982), wisely questions the use of Hebrew terminology, such as Tanakh, by Christian commentators. However, this study intentionally avoids importing Christian assumptions into the discussion and my use of the terms Tanakh, Torah, Former and Latter Prophets will represent this intention.
story of Judges 3 and is further developed in Judges 10-12 which includes the tragedy about Israel's leader, Jephthah, and his daughter. The story of Ruth the Moabite, portrayed as an ancestress of king David, is also set in this era. A number of battles between Israel and her eastern neighbours are recorded in the books of Samuel and Kings and condemnations appear in the prophets, particularly in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. All of these books, along with Nehemiah, also record co-operative links, including intermarriages between Israel and her neighbours, both within the royal houses and among the people, through which their respective religions come into conflict.

Outside of Genesis, we find in Tanakh no acknowledgement of a common ancestry for Israel, Moab and Ammon. Such a link is established through the relationship of Lot and Abraham who are respectively grandson and son of Terah and also ancestors of Moab and Ammon and of Israel. The only two references to Lot elsewhere in Tanakh (Deut 2: 9, 19; Ps 83:8) also refer to him as ancestor of the people of Moab and Ammon but do not mention any kinship with Israel, which is particularly surprising in the former case. My analysis therefore turns to the ancestral narrative in Gen11:27-25:11, identified in the Hebrew text under the heading 'the toledot (generations) of Terah'. It is of interest that this heading refers to Terah instead of Abraham, although the subsequent narrative says very little about Terah and concerns mostly Abraham. Through Terah, the heading thus deliberately incorporates Moab and Ammon into the story of Israel.

A reading of the ancestral narrative must allow that the patriarchal names, 'Abraham' and 'Lot', may serve a patronymic function in some texts where stories about Lot and Abraham reflect the corporate relationships of their descendants. This is to be expected since the narrative of Genesis was compiled over a long period and reached finality only after the Babylonian exile, long after the time referred to in most of the stories of Moab and Ammon. The story of Lot and Abraham is therefore a key to the question of identity and boundaries I have proposed and occupies a major part of this study. A brief outline of the story appears at the end of this introduction.

References to Lot in Genesis appear in just five chapters of which only Genesis 13 and 19 treat Lot with full characterisation, particularly in relation to the story of the destruction of Sodom. Although the ancestral narrative is largely devoted to traditions about Abraham, much of it will be in view in my comparative analysis of the stories of Abraham and the stories of Lot. I also examine a number of other Tanakh texts that bear a special literary relationship to Genesis 19. Among these are prophetic traditions about Sodom, which has no link to Lot outside of Genesis. Biblical texts are quoted from the NRSV except in a number of cases where the NRSV does not meet the needs of the linguistic comparisons I wish to draw.

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2 For the sake of clarity throughout the paper, the term 'narrative' will refer to the text as literature while the word 'story' will refer to the sequence of events in the text.
Conventional interpretations

A review of a variety of commentary from the last one hundred years of biblical scholarship soon reveals that most commentators privilege one particular view of Moab and Ammon as traditional enemies of Israel, and correspondingly of Lot as a pathetic figure. This view takes for granted the accepted orthodoxy of Jewish and Christian teaching concerning Abraham and his significance in terms of faith and righteousness and blessing and covenant.\(^3\) As none of these notions is specifically linked to Lot at any point, his significance is minimal to those who hold these notions to be primary and so the figure of Lot has remained secondary in conventional commentary. This is illustrated by the title of George Coats' article (1985): 'Lot as a Foil in the Abraham Saga'. Not only has the character, Lot, been treated as insignificant, but also the activities surrounding Lot, whether of human or divine initiative, are frequently assessed in comparison with those surrounding Abraham. Numerous references in commentaries moralise about the actions of Lot and denigrate his character, often in direct comparisons with Abraham.

Such conventional commentary may be explained by the prominence of Abraham in the text and by the specific, if brief, commentary which affirms positive attributes of Abraham that go beyond what the reader might determine from the story alone (Gen 15:6; 19:29). Such commentary foreshadows the increasing tendency of the three subsequent religions to idealise the character of Abraham and, in the case of Judaism, to place him at the centre of tradition.\(^4\) Although these texts cannot be discounted, they do not justify the numerous examples of commentary that are naively judgmental towards Lot, for Genesis contains no statement that condemns Lot on moral or religious grounds. As I elaborate below, a careful reading of the Genesis account shows that Lot and Abraham exhibit similar elements of moral ambiguity.

In this study I aim to show the validity of readings of the biblical accounts both of Lot and of his descendants that differ from the conventional readings and reveal a more complex relationship between Israel and her neighbours. These accounts throw light upon the tension between the traditions of universal grace and those of particular covenant and election that exist in each of the three mideastern religions. This is precisely the tension between the two major stories of Lot. The story of Abraham and Lot parting company (Genesis 13) represents the differentiation between

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\(^3\) The possibility of a different viewpoint is illustrated in Islamic tradition which venerates Abraham but also gives Lot the status of prophet (Surah 6:86).

\(^4\) Evidence of this tendency in Tanakh and Talmud, in the New Testament and in the Qur'an is gathered in my earlier comparative study (Tonson: 1987) and summarised in my penultimate chapter below.
people of different religions and ideologies, while the two stories of Lot's rescue in Sodom by divine agency (Genesis 19) represent a conception of the universal love of God.

Postmodern hermeneutics

A departure from the then prevailing approach to Genesis is evident in the successive editions of the commentary by Gerhard von Rad. Between the German editions of 1949 and 1971 von Rad rewrote much of the original introduction and some of the commentary to accommodate new literary approaches in order to uphold both the historic and the symbolic values of biblical traditions. Von Rad (1972: 35) draws attention to the transparency of the text, meaning that there are often clear signs in the text itself that the tradition has been adapted to the viewpoint and the needs of the community of the redactor. A text may therefore exhibit a variety of viewpoints because of the artistic capacity of redactors to qualify significantly its dominant message. So Gunn and Fewell (1993:204-205) affirm that the multivocal nature of the Bible makes provision for its own critique; in particular they observe that a focus upon characters other than the heroes of Israel is most fruitful because 'texts do more than they say'. This observation is illustrated by my exploration of ways in which the story of Lot critiques or deconstructs the dominant ideology centred upon Abraham.\footnote{A discussion of the notion of ideology appears below at the beginning of the chapter on the history of traditions. While I consider that all theology is an expression of ideology, I do not intend by this statement to qualify in any way conceptions of revelation that religious communities hold as the source of their theology. That is to say, the ideology behind a text may be considered for its possible revelatory character in the same way as the theology to which the ideology gives rise.}

Not only may we affirm various positive aspects of the character Lot but we also may see in the story of Lot's rescue from Sodom a theological masterpiece which stands in its own right.

My postmodern reading of the texts of Genesis attempts to free the story of Lot from the constraints imposed by the way the story of Abraham functions, in all three middle eastern religions, as a 'metanarrative'. Stephen White (1991: 5) defines metanarrative as a foundational interpretive scheme that provides justification for action. The approach of conventional commentaries towards Lot may be explained by this established function of the story of Abraham. However, as Derrida (1986: 9-11) illustrates in regard to the American Declaration of Independence, legitimation is a two way street between a text and its community of interpretation. While the Declaration is a metanarrative that legitimates life in terms of 'self-evident' truths about God and humanity, the Declaration itself depends upon the legitimation of its signatories. The importance of this balance is expressed by Brett (1995: 86) in his advocacy of a reading that both respects and resists the author.

In order to consider the story of Lot apart from the conventional privileged status of Abraham I relinquish the notion of a most correct reading, allowing for a variety of interpretations that arise
from metaphor and ambiguity in the text. Studies of irony and of intertextual links help to elicit these interpretations. Subjective reader responses to the text add to the variety.\textsuperscript{6} It is for the reader to consider whether the argumentation of the study is compelling and whether the fresh perspective offered is fruitful.

A postmodern approach engages not only the text but also contemporary discourses in sociology and philosophy.\textsuperscript{7} It takes seriously the perspectives of other living faiths, cultures and life styles and the need to respond to otherness, to difference. These are matters I turn to, briefly, in the final chapter. The relationships between Lot and Abraham and their family members and between their descendants represent the pluralism we experience not only in relations between religions and cultures now living in close proximity in so many countries but also within individual religions and denominations and even within the family unit. The story of Lot and his daughters especially touches upon the dynamic, self-conscious encounter between woman and man. The treatment of Lot and Abraham in Tanakh and in subsequent traditions illustrates the way in which communities in a pluralistic context define their identity in relation to social boundaries. In the terms used by White (1991: 20) this study will emphasise alongside the 'action-co-ordinating function' of language (with its desire to make the world more tractable), the 'world-disclosing function', to show the capacity of the story of Lot to communicate in a pluralist world.

2. An outline of the study:

To a large degree each chapter of this study provides an independent perspective upon the relationship of Israel and her eastern neighbours and each raises its own methodological issues. As Robert Sacks (1990: ii) states in the introduction to his creative, literary commentary on Genesis: 'A discourse on Methods of Interpretation ... would presuppose that we already know how to read the book before we begin.' For this reason it seems best to treat issues of methodology at the beginning of each new chapter of the study and to engage the narratives under discussion as early as possible.

\textsuperscript{6} To a large degree, the scholarship of conventional commentary has been positivist in character and has not acknowledged the subjective stance of the scholar. A postmodern reading may critique not only the ideology which appears in commentary on the narrative but also that found within the narrative itself. This process begins with an account of the dialogue between one's own ideology and that of the text.

\textsuperscript{7} Campbell (1991: 17) provides a helpful explanation of the value of both the conventional critical study of the biblical text and the creative reading of the text which attends to the time and context of today.
Introduction

My study begins with texts concerning the nations of Moab and Ammon which have a clear historiographical aspect and provide an appropriate setting for subsequent consideration of the story of Lot and Abraham. By way of contrast with conventional bible commentary, which has treated Moab and Ammon as Israel’s traditional enemies and has taken the difference in religion as the essential interpretive criterion regarding the relationship between them, this present study will give equal weight to the common ethnicity. The several indications of co-operative relationships illustrate the range of attitudes towards Israel’s neighbours that are recorded in Tanakh. An outline of the history of Moab and Ammon concludes this introduction.

An analysis of parallels within the ancestral narrative between elements of the stories of Lot and Abraham reveals the privileging of Abraham which is evident both within Tanakh and in later traditions and commentary to the present day. The absence of significant differences between Lot and Abraham in the arena of the mundane, including moral character and action, highlights the ideological purpose of the distinctions that emerge in the relation between the human characters and the divine. The interest of the Lot traditions in the rescue of the marginalised contrasts with the interest of the Abraham traditions in reward for the righteous. This positive element in the Lot story corresponds to the eirenic view of Moab and Ammon established in the previous chapter. A number of literary and thematic links between the ancestral narrative and the accounts of Israel and her neighbours supports the view that the story of Lot portrays a perspective upon Moab and Ammon from later Israel. The rescue of Lot as a person outside of the divine covenant with Abraham affirms a significant status for Moab and Ammon alongside Israel in the divine economy.

As the single narrative in which Lot appears independently of Abraham, Genesis 19 provides a unique window for this study, through its accounts of Lot’s relationships with the divine messengers, with his daughters and with Sodom. My literary analysis identifies two major acts in the chapter separated by a short interlude. On the basis of a consistent pattern of action and speech throughout the first act of Genesis 19, I advance my own original conception of the eirenic viewpoint of the narrator concerning Lot and his relationship to the divine, which differs markedly from the assessment of conventional commentaries. This viewpoint is also evident in the second act concerning the origins of Moab and Ammon.

The particular interests of the compiler of Genesis 19 are thrown into relief by several intertextual studies, touching upon the traditions of Sodom and of Zoar, the story of hospitality in Judges 19, the story of the deluge (Genesis 6-9) and stories of women who act to preserve seed. From both the analysis of Genesis 19 and the intertextual study, I conclude that the Sodom theme is incidental to the story of Lot in his relation to the divine. The ideology of the compiler of Genesis 19 is most evident in the elements which are unique to the Lot narrative, namely Lot’s dialogue with the messenger about his escape to Zoar and the stories of Lot and his daughters.
I next move to a diachronic approach to the text, since each of the preceding chapters raises the possibility of diverse traditions lying behind the texts of Genesis, and also behind the other accounts of Moab and Ammon. My analysis does not assume that the emphasis of the final form of the narratives is the key perspective appropriate to the story of Lot, since there are elements of redaction in Genesis 19 which are in opposition to the dominant emphasis of the story of Lot in the ancestral narrative. Against the prevailing view, I find evidence to separate the story of Lot from the work of the Yahwist associated with the promise traditions of the ancestral narrative. The distinct tradition history of the story of Lot corresponds to the distinct ideology already identified. I consider whether the stories of Lot have a derivation east of the Jordan and whether the stories were of particular interest to the Deuteronomists.

In the final chapter of this study I focus on the main themes of the narratives concerning Lot and Abraham, and Moab and Ammon and Israel, and the perspective these stories offer to the situation of religious plurality. These stories are especially relevant to this situation because of the tension they embody between inclusion and exclusion. As the first character in Genesis to be formally distinguished from the chosen line of Abraham (Genesis 13), Lot occupies a primary place in the development of the theme of separation which expresses Israel's sense of national identity and the otherness of her neighbours. At the same time the theme of divine mercy also appears first in Tanakh in relation to Lot and in the context of the ancestral narrative is confined to his story (Genesis 19). This tension between separation and mercy also appears in accounts of the relationship of Israel to Moab and Ammon, which sometimes function to distinguish, sometimes to incorporate.

The stories of Lot, Moab and Ammon illustrate that there were elements of Israelite society that possessed a sense of commensality (to use a concept from Weber, 1964: 39-41) that was not limited to the covenant community and the traditional Abrahamicism of orthodoxies associated with Abraham as an ideal. The stories therefore have a special potential to communicate in the context of the pluralism of the postmodern era.

3. An outline of Gen 11-25

Following is a brief outline of the plot of Genesis 11-25 according to the way in which it gives context to the story of Lot. We first meet the name of Lot along with Abraham and Sarah in the framework of a genealogy of the family of Terah (11:27-32).\(^8\) This genealogy records that Sarah was barren, which sets the scene for the subsequent stories of Abraham and Sarah. Lot, Abraham and Sarah remain linked in an itinerary structure which leads them from Mesopotamia to Egypt and

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\(^8\) In Genesis 11-16 the names Abram and Sarai are used but throughout this study I will use the common forms, Abraham and Sarah, which originate in Genesis 17.
back to the central highlands of Canaan (Gen 11:31 - 13:1). The migration from Haran in Mesopotamia is presented as a decision of Abraham in response to a spoken invitation from God (12:1-4a). To this point, no characterisation is given for Lot and he is merely a passive figure in the story of Abraham.

A new situation emerges in Genesis 13 where both Abraham and Lot are heads of considerable households and wealthy stock owners. Lot chooses to go his own way and settles with his household in the pasture of the Jordan Valley. Again the action is at the instigation of Abraham, who has the only speaking part (13:8f). The scene is set for the subsequent story of Lot by the commentary that the men of Sodom were very wicked (13:13). The story of Genesis 14 is built upon Lot's capture, along with others from Sodom, by kings from the north. Abraham and his servants rescue Lot and restore goods and people (14:16). Again there is no characterisation of Lot, and no action or speech is attributed to him.

We next meet Lot in Genesis 19 where he is now a resident of Sodom with a wife and daughters. The chapter tells first of the hospitality he offers to divine messengers who rescue his family from the destruction of Sodom and second of the preservation of Lot's seed through a strategy of incest planned and undertaken by his daughters. Genesis 19 is set between chapters concerning the desire of Abraham and Sarah for an heir which is resolved through the divine promise of a son in Genesis 18 and the birth of Isaac in Genesis 21. The remaining chapters of the ancestral narrative complete the story of Abraham and Sarah and make the transition to traditions about Isaac.

4. An outline of the story of Moab and Ammon

For the story of Moab and Ammon, we are dependent almost entirely upon Israelite traditions, which provide a somewhat discontinuous account. These traditions assert that Moab and Ammon took control of the high country east of the Dead Sea and of the Jordan respectively, somewhat before the Israelites emerged in the region led by Joshua. A Moabite viewpoint is provided by the Moabite Stone containing an inscription by king Mesha from the eighth century BCE. The Moabite Stone gives an account of warfare with king Omri of Israel that is consistent with the biblical record. It also shows the closest links between Hebrew and the Moabite language.

The historical existence of these nations to the east of Israel is also attested in Assyrian records from the late eighth century. Recent studies of relevant archaeological data are found in Dearman (1989) and Bienkowski (1992). Like Israel, Moab and Ammon were beholden to the major empires that emerged during the first millennium BCE and were reduced to provincial status. Following the Persian period, their territories were finally dominated by Arabic peoples and culture from further east. See Miller (1992b) for a fuller historical account.
THE SONS OF LOT AND THE SONS OF ABRAHAM

This chapter provides an analysis of Tanakh texts that reflect attitudes in Israel towards her neighbours, Moab and Ammon. The relationship between Israel and her eastern neighbours provides a fruitful study because Moab and Ammon were close to Israel geographically and culturally and because Israel had a tradition of close kinship with these neighbours. The relationship illustrates what J. Z. Smith (1985: 15) calls 'proximate otherness', and reveals the complexity of the boundary between 'us' and those who are 'like us'. Historical details concerning Moab and Ammon are not at issue in this chapter but only the viewpoints of Israelite traditions about them. Treatments of some issues of historical interest are indicated in a number of the footnotes. Geographical and historical details treated in this introduction to the chapter serve to provide a background for the later discussion.

The comparative importance of Moab and Ammon within Israelite traditions is evident in the twenty-five texts where these neighbours are mentioned within lists of Israel's neighbours. Compared to others of Israel's neighbours, Moab and Ammon have the most consistent place and importance in texts referring to all periods of Israelite history. In the seven references to the period of early settlement, we find that Moab is the one neighbour of Israel that appears throughout, with the Philistines and Amalekites next in frequency. The story of Israel's early encounter with Moab has an importance in later tradition that is second only to the Exodus from Egypt. This pattern is sustained in the five lists referring to the united and divided kingdoms of Judah and Israel, in which Ammon appears next after Moab. However in seven of the nine prophetic references, Moab and Ammon follow after Philistia or Edom. A feature of Deuteronomy 23, Jeremiah 9 and Ezekiel, as of Ezra and Nehemiah, is that Ammon comes ahead of Moab, reflecting a view of its greater influence in the later years.

Moab and Ammon may be identified first in terms of the territories they occupied alongside Israel east of the Jordan River, between the Wadi Hesa in the south and the Wadi Yarmuk in the north, a distance of only two hundred kilometres. This territory was divided by the Wadi Mujib, a canyon 600m deep, which was the northern limit of Moab at her weakest. At other times Moab controlled extensive areas to the north of the Mujib. Deep chasms on both sides of the Jordan limited north-
south movement but the ease of east-west movement enhanced communication between Israel and these neighbours.9

Biblical references to the land of Ammon are few but there are three kinds of geographical references to Moab. We first find 'the field (ṣādeh) of Moab' as a location for warfare (Gen 36:35) but later referring to agricultural land.10 The fertile regions of Moab high on the plateau supported sheep farming (2 Kings 3:4) and vineyards (Isa 16:7-10). References to the Plains of Moab, which appear first in the latter chapters of Numbers, refer to the lowlands east of the Jordan River opposite the plains of Jericho.11 For this region, the book of Deuteronomy prefers the phrase 'land (ṣereṣ) of Moab', which appears in parallel to the location of Sinai as a place of covenant (1:5; 29:1). According to the biblical record, Moab did not have firm control of these low lands. A variety of references appear to the towns and borders of Moab and Ammon.12

The relationships between Israel and her eastern neighbours are described largely in the narrative accounts of the Former Prophets and in the oracles of the Latter Prophets but they are briefly foreshadowed in a few texts in the Torah (Numbers and Deuteronomy). There is also a Moabite text, the Mesha Inscription of the ninth century BCE, that provides the earliest independent witness to biblical accounts of the relationship between Moab and Israel.13 Within its thirty-three lines of

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9 In an historical account of Moab, Dearden (1958: 30) reports that west and east were linked under common administration by Greeks, Nabataeans, Romans and even Crusaders.

10 The term 'field' appears fifteen times in the book of Ruth to refer generally to the productivity of Moabite territory and particularly to the lands owned by Boaz and Naomi. The Hebrew term ṣādeh, is also translated in the KJV as 'country', e.g. Numbers 21:20 narrates that Israel moved via Bamoth in 'the field of Moab'. See also Gen 14:7, 32:3; 1 Sam 27.

11 According to Josh 13:32, it was here that Moses prepared Israel for entry into Canaan. However, the Hebrew for 'plain' is ṣ̄ārubh, meaning an arid or sterile region, which more truly characterises the depression from the Dead Sea southward.

12 The first town mentioned is 'Ar of Moab' (Num 21:15), inland on the southern boundary of Moab, where the encounter between the prophet Balaam and King Balak of Moab is set (Num 22:36). Subsequent references in Deuteronomy 2 and Isaiah 15 indicate that Ar was a leading city in Moab. A comparable city in Ammon was Rabbah (Deut 3:11).

13 The Mesha Stele was apparently erected at Dibon by king Mesha of Moab in the ninth century BCE to record his military campaigns and honour his god, Kemosh. Finegan (1959: 188) reports that it was identified by a German traveller in 1868 and now rests in the Louvre. Apart from the Mesha Inscription, no other written records from ancient Moab and Ammon have yet been found. References to Moab and Ammon appear in the records of various ancient empires.
text, the inscription refers to several place names common in Tanakh and acknowledges conflict with the northern kingdom of Israel. It especially notes that the Israelites of the tribe of Gad had been settled east of Jordan around Ateroth from early times, which is in harmony with several studies edited by Bienkowski (1992). These studies show that Moab emerged as a political entity about the same time as Israel late in the second millennium BCE.¹⁴

As to the culture of the Moabites, Miller (1989: 13) notes that their language, pottery and architecture were closer to those of Israel than were those of Egypt and Syria.¹⁵ Thompson (1974b: 70) establishes that in the Late Bronze period, settlement in both Palestine and east of Jordan was characterised by small village agriculture. Kautz (1981: 33) notes that the four-room house plan, typical of Israel, is also found on the fringes of Moab.

The treatment in this chapter of Israelite attitudes is to be understood as a discussion of ideologies, by which term I refer to both the theology and the social and political values conveyed by the text.¹⁶ In my approach to the texts, I allow that specific theological propositions may arise to explain or justify ideological commitments that already existed in the communities which preserved those texts. The analysis in this and subsequent chapters shows that the plural (ideologies) is fundamental to this study. In some texts, contrasting viewpoints are evident between what is conveyed in story form and what is stated explicitly in commentary by the narrator. Similar contrasts appear between what we learn through the story on the human plane and what we learn through the stories of encounter with the divine. Often the latter are more freighted with ideology. In the third place, there are sometimes opposing viewpoints within the range of written traditions that refer to one event.

A key result of this analysis is that the biblical traditions about Moab and Ammon exhibit both eirenic and hostile attitudes on the part of Israel. These contrasting attitudes function to help legitimate in different situations the way Israel's relations with her neighbours are played out (Steinberg, 1993: 34). They also reflect different perspectives held within Israel towards her own identity and status. Further ambiguity appears between those biblical traditions that recognise

¹⁴ Rendsburg (1981) provides a useful analysis of Moabite history in the context of the biblical accounts.

¹⁵ Sarna (1989: 139) asserts that Moabite and Ammonite were closer to the Hebrew language than to Aramaic. In his study of the language of the Mesha Inscription, Kent Jackson (1989: 130) affirms: 'It is probable that Moabite and Hebrew were for the most part mutually intelligible.' Another detailed study of the inscription is found in Smelik (1992).

¹⁶ Younger (1990: 47-51) discusses the development from the negative conception of ideology held by Marx to the value free understandings of recent writers.
kinship between Israel and her neighbours and those that strongly distinguish the religions (the gods) east of Jordan from those of Israel. Analysis of the various texts suggests that the notion of kinship between Israel and her neighbours is a social construction representing a particular ideological purpose of one group within Israel, namely the bearers of the tradition of Genesis 19 and Deuteronomy 2.

My analysis will first assess the mundane aspects of the relationship between Israel and Moab and Ammon and will then turn to a discussion of their conceptions of divinity and cultic practice. I demonstrate that alongside the range of hostile and eirenic accounts on the human plane there is a corresponding polarity of viewpoints regarding cultic matters. The different degrees of commensalism between Israel and Moab and Ammon found in different traditions provide a perspective upon the range of attitudes towards otherness expressed today between peoples of different religion and culture.

1. **Israel’s Relations with Moab and Ammon**

The following analysis treats Tanakh texts regarding relationships between Israel and Moab and Ammon, distinguishing accounts with a hostile view from those with an eirenic view. A mix of both types appears regarding all eras of Israelite history and across the range of literary types, including narrative accounts, legal texts and prophetic oracles. Since accounts from one period largely reflect attitudes of a later period, and because ideological elements are everywhere present, we may not assume that a particular story of encounter reflects the historical reality to which it refers.

*Accounts of hostile relationships*

The hostile encounters reported in Tanakh sometimes originate with Israel and sometimes with her neighbours. I will treat the latter category first. The first story of encounter between Israel and Moab is set in the Plains of Moab where Israel is about to cross the Jordan into Canaan (Numbers 22-24). Afraid of conflict, Balak, the king of Moab, sought the services of the prophet Balaam from

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17 The references are documented in a table in the appendix.
Mesopotamia to curse Israel. In this account, divine intervention frustrates the king's plan and Israel moves on peacefully. A different version of this story found in Joshua 24:9f states that Moab fought against Israel but that Israel was delivered by YHWH. A similar perspective is expressed in Micah 6:5 where the prophet places the incident alongside the Exodus as witness to YHWH's care for Israel. In these two texts, the picture of Israel at risk contrasts with Moab's fear of Israel portrayed in Numbers 22-24.

The initial era of Israel's settled life is portrayed in the book of Judges as a series of episodes of oppression by her neighbours. In each case a warrior leader rescues Israel from foreign domination but both the oppression and deliverance of Israel are attributed to the direct intervention of YHWH who punishes Israel for turning to the worship of Baal and Astarte but delivers Israel when she repents. Within this pattern is the story of king Eglon of Moab who captures Jericho.

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18 Tanakh encompasses contrasting traditions about the character Balaam. In Numbers 24 he is a seer responsive to YHWH but in 31:16 he is accused of leading the Israelite women into sin. Elsewhere we read that he was killed by the Israelites (Num 31:1-8; Josh 13:22). The identification of the origin of Balaam (Num 22:5) differs in various translations but Samaritan, Syriac and Vulgate versions identify 'the land of Ammon', which links Balaam to the children of Lot. The Masoretic text and the Septuagint read 'the land of the children of his people (Hebrew `ammoi)' while other translations read the land of Amaw, which is a name appearing on inscriptions from the 16th and 15th centuries BCE. Milgrom (1989: 473-6) provides an excursus on the Balaam inscription found at Deir'Alla in which tradition Balaam appears to be linked to a pagan cult. In this connection see also Hackett (1987).

19 The story of Balaam is built around the prospect, rather than the reality, of conflict between Moab and Israel. Furthermore, once Israel is camped opposite Jericho, the territory of Moab is already behind them and conflict is unnecessary. The Israelites do not appear at all in the story so that the story of Balaam is somewhat detached from its context. Miller (1992b: 887) elaborates on the discontinuities in the 'Plains of Moab' narrative. Mary Douglas (1993: 39, 232) asserts that the book of Numbers as a whole presents a priestly attempt 'to constrain a populist xenophobia', in opposition to the doctrines of Ezra and Neheemiah. Their opposition to Samaritans is rejected through the all-Israel viewpoint of Numbers.

20 There are no stories in Joshua of encounters between Israel and Moab and Ammon.

21 The events of the period of the Judges are recalled later in Samuel's farewell exhortation to Israel where he refers to three oppressing powers from that period, namely Hazor, Philistia and Moab (1 Sam 12:9-11).
and enslaves Israel for eighteen years (Judges 3: 1-14).\textsuperscript{22} When Israel cried out, Yahweh sent Ehud of the tribe of Benjamin, who rose up to assassinate the fat king Eglon and to lead the Israelites in the slaughter of thousands of Moabites. While full details of Ehud's murderous plot are spelt out, there is no description of life under Moabite rule to support the general references to oppression.

Ammonite hostility towards Israel is first depicted in the sixth major episode of Judges which reports that the Ammonites crossed the Jordan to fight the tribes of Benjamin and Ephraim (Judges 10:6-14). Under the leadership of Jephthah, Israel recaptured the towns of Gilead with a great slaughter of the Ammonites. This story twice refers back to hostility during Israel's contact with Ammon at her first approach to Canaan. The first reference depicts Israel under threat from Ammon, although Tanakh has no account of such an incident (Judges 10:11). The reverse situation is depicted in the second reference where the king of Ammon complains to Jephthah that Israel had taken away his land (11:13).\textsuperscript{23} In defence Jephthah recalls the tradition (found in Numbers 21) that the territory between the rivers was earlier under the control of Sihon king of Heshbon, not of Ammon.\textsuperscript{24}

The hostility of king Nahash of Ammon is advanced in Samuel's farewell speech, in the tradition hostile to kingship, as the reason for the adoption of the monarchy in Israel (1 Samuel 11:1-3; 12:12).\textsuperscript{25} However, an account of the succession of Hanun, son of king Nahash, portrays a relationship of loyalty between Nahash and David. The subsequent siege of Rabbah and subjugation of Ammon by Joab, David's general, is justified by a report that Hanun refused to continue co-

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\textsuperscript{22} The initial reference to an alliance between Eglon and the Ammonites and Amalekites is not developed in the account which seems to focus solely on the Moabites.

\textsuperscript{23} This assertion of the king of Ammon is in harmony with the tradition of Joshua 13:23-25 which states that half of the territory of Ammon was allotted to the tribes of Gad and Reuben.

\textsuperscript{24} The changing status of these lands is acknowledged in Numbers 21:26 which states however, that it was Moab which had lost the land between the rivers to Sihon. Miller (1992a: 84) suggests that if the conquest of Sihon is a Deuteronomic tradition, then it aims to legitimate Israelite control of northern Moab without conceding any Israelite conquest of Moabite territory. The claim in Numbers 21:26 that Sihon's land was originally Moabite is not found in the parallel account in Deuteronomy, which may indicate the redactor does not wish to recall any evidence of a Moabite claim to that land.

\textsuperscript{25} Evidence of two alternative views of the monarchy in the early chapters of 1 Samuel is set out by Boadt (1984: 228-9).
operation with David and humiliated his ambassadors (2 Sam 10:1-14; 12:26-31). The people of Rabbah and other Ammonite towns were subjected to forced labour with saws, hoes, axes, or making bricks (2 Sam 12:26-31).

In the biblical record of the divided kingdom, nothing is written about either Moab or Ammon until the story of the rebellion of king Mesha upon the death of Ahab, around 849 BCE (2 Kings 3:4-5). Mesha apparently halted tribute payments to Israel of meat and wool from his flocks of sheep. The report of a subsequent battle of Moab against Israel, Judah and Edom describes an abrupt and inconclusive end to the conflict when Mesha sacrificed his son (2 Kings 3:26-7). We are dependent on Chronicles for an account with a similar setting which describes how Moab and Ammon joined forces with others and captured Hazazon Tamar on the western shore of the Dead Sea but were soon repulsed (2 Chronicles 20). The earliest prophetic accusation against Moab and Ammon, found in the prophet Amos, may relate to this battle. Amos pronounces the destruction of fortresses and the death of Moab's leaders and people (Amos 1:13-2:3). Ammon's leaders will be exiled because they ripped open pregnant women in their assault on Gilead.

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26 Ironically, this battle which reportedly brought David's kingdom to its zenith, also saw the death of Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba his lover, and thus stands at the turning point towards developing tragedy for David.

27 Contrast this comparatively mild regime with David's subjugation of the Moabites which is given no justification whatever (2 Sam 8:2).

28 Rendsburg (1981: 67) argues that Moab had earlier regained some independence, since the Mesha Stele narrates how king Omri of northern Israel had subsequently repossessed the land of Medeba. Miller (1989: 34-9) concludes that the Moabites had kept direct control of Dibon and the central plateau while Omri ruled in the north. Moab had probably not yet reached a unified national status, since references to the south are lacking on the Mesha Stele.

29 In the opening description of the campaign there are several literary parallels with the account of the campaign against Syria by Ahab and Jehoshaphat. This may weaken the historical claim of some details.

30 The Chronicler explains that Hazazon Tamar was another name for Engedi which was a stronghold for David when Saul was pursuing him (1 Sam 23:29). Rendsburg (1981: 70) links this campaign to an uncertain reference in the Mesha Stele which may suggest that Edom, a tributary of Judah, was subjugated by Moab and forced to join the battle.

31 Reference to Tekoa, the home town of Amos, provides a link between 2 Chron 20:20 and Amos 1:1. See Rendsburg (1981: 70).
In reports of the late ninth century, hostilities take the form of raiding bands from Moab against Israel (2 Kings 13:20) and of the assassination of King Joash of Judah by two of his own officials whose mothers were from Moab and Ammon (2 Kings 12:20; 2 Chron 24:26). Reports of tribute payments by Ammon during the eighth century portray the dominance of Judah over Ammon (2 Chron 26:6-8, 27:5).

Along with the above reports of hostilities are more than an equal number in which conflict is initiated by Israel. The first Tanakh reference to Moab outside of Genesis is found in the Song of Moses (Exodus 15) which is an example of an established Israelite tradition about the journey from Egypt to Canaan. The main portion of the Song envisions the fear that falls upon the inhabitants and leaders of Philistia, Edom, Moab and Canaan when they hear the news of the demise of Pharaoh’s army and see Israel pass by. In this way the Song prepares the reader to expect a pattern of ongoing conflict between Israel and Moab.

Short lists of military campaigns by both Saul and David mention battles with Moab and Ammon (1 Sam 11:11; 14:47; 2 Sam 8:12). A report of David’s summary execution of two thirds of his

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32 Dearman (1989, 207) cites Assyrian evidence of Moabite raiding parties. Perhaps the Moabites followed the pattern they also suffered at the hands of Midianites of the eastern desert, as described by Peake Pasha (1958: 11), who appeared with their cattle when the crops were maturing and wasted the land. Rendsburg (1981: 73) notes that Moab is not mentioned in the reports of Shalmaneser III (858-824) and concludes that after the reign of Mesha, ‘Moab returned to its former status as a relatively insignificant state’. However Rendsburg also admits that Judah similarly was not mentioned. In any case, such reports have little to say about the interaction of what in the international setting were always very minor states.

33 The tribute consisted of silver, wheat and barley, which was quite different to the pastoral tribute paid by Moab to Jehoshaphat.

34 The typical feature of this tradition is the way in which the song begins with the Exodus (vv. 1-13) and attaches to it references to other critical encounters between Israel and her neighbours (vv. 14-18).

35 Note that Ammon does not appear in the Song of Moses and similarly does not appear in the story of Israel’s approach to Canaan other than in a reference to its strongly defended border (Num 21:24). References in the second part of the Song clearly refer to events yet to be unfolded in the biblical record and use expressions typical of later literary traditions. The Song closes with the vision of YHWH ‘planting’ Israel on a ‘mountain’ of their own, which is the language of Ezek 17:22f and Dan 11:45. The earliest reference to YHWH planting Israel in a place of their own is in 2 Sam 7:10.
Moabite prisoners (2 Sam 8:2) recalls the total destruction of captured towns and prisoners described in the book of Joshua according to a policy that allowed no possibility of co-operative relationships.36

A hostile viewpoint on the part of Israel dominates the prophetic texts that refer to the eras of Assyrian and Babylonian dominance from the mid-eighth century to the sixth (Amos 1-2; Isaiah 13-23; Jeremiah 46-51; Ezekiel 25-32; Zeph 2:8-11). Throughout the prophetic books, the eastern peoples are distinctively identified, the one by the collective noun, 'Moab' and the other, by the phrase: 'the sons of Ammon'. The frequent parallels between these terms in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Amos and Zephaniah indicate that 'Moab' most often refers not to the country but to its people. Lack of reference to physical warfare reflects the common status of Israel, Moab and Ammon as tributary to Assyria and the application of policies of deportation and colonisation on both sides of the Jordan.37 In the oracles of Amos, Isaiah and Zephaniah, the condemnation of various neighbours of Israel is a preliminary to judgement upon the Israelites. This may explain why particular offences are not always detailed. Zephaniah accuses Moab and Ammon of insulting God's people and boasting that they would seize Israel's land, for which they will be destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah.

Among the prophecies of the Babylonian period are warnings of coming destruction directed to several nations, including Moab and Ammon (Jer 25:15-38), but no specific accusations are made against Moab and Ammon. The same is true of references to Moab and Ammon in Isa 11:10-16 and Ps 60:6-12 which foresee beyond the exile of Israel to a restoration of the Davidic kingdom that will again subjugate surrounding nations. The final oracle of Balaam concerning the conquest of Moab (Num 24:14-24) has similar characteristics.38 The most specific accusations against Moab appear

36 In the light of this policy, it is difficult to assess just how hostile David's action is to be considered since it may have been common practice to execute all prisoners. The version of this incident in 1 Chronicles 18, which omits mention of the executions, provides an excellent example of the Chronicler's sanitising tendency. The Chronicler does, however, duplicate another brief reference which tells of two lion-like Moabites, slain by one of David's mighty man (2 Sam 23:20; 1 Chron 11:22).

37 These circumstances are affirmed in both biblical and Assyrian records (2 Kings 15:19; 1 Chron 5:26; Hoffner, 1975: 138).

38 The oracle of Balaam appears superfluous to the preceding story which has an adequate ending at verse 13, with verse 25 included. Moreover, the inclusion of this oracle is inconsistent with the transparent structure of the Balaam story, with its double pattern of three oracles as elucidated below. Indications of its later origin appear in verse seventeen where Balaam looks into the future and sees a sceptre arising out of Judah (Num 24:17). This verse refers to the monarchy of Israel.
in the four oracles of Jeremiah 48 (similar to those of Isaiah 15-16), and against Ammon, in Jer 49:1-6. In addition to the typical accusations of arrogance and scorn (48:26-27), Jeremiah describes Moab and Ammon as over-confident in their resources (48:7; 49:4) and asserts that the people of Moab were war-loving (48:45). 39

A series of oracles against Israel's neighbours in Ezekiel gives priority to Ammon and Moab (Ezek 25:1-11). Ezekiel first imagines the king of Babylon at the crossroads to Judah and Ammon but although he advances first on Judah, Ammon will suffer equally (Ezek 21:20, 28-32). Leaders of both nations are described in criminal terms and under the threat of a final punishment (21:24f, 29). The accusation against Ammon of scorn towards Israel is especially elaborated in Ezekiel: 'Because you said, 'Aha' against my sanctuary when it was profaned .... Because you clapped your hands and danced for joy, full of malice against the land of Israel ...'. For these reasons YHWH will hand Ammon over to the Arabians and the nation will be annihilated (Ezek 25:1-7). The same fate will befall Moab because she treated Judah as no different from other nations (25:8-11). A similar oracle in Isa 25:10-12, within the apocalyptic section of Isaiah, foreshadows the destruction of Moabite fortresses.

A clear assessment of the hostile viewpoint in the oracles is difficult to determine for three reasons. First, the condemnations of Moab and Ammon often stand within collections of oracles directed to all of Israel's neighbours that reflect a formal ideological stance in favour of Israel rather than particular hostility towards other nations. Second, insults and military posturing were no doubt a common feature of international relationships and do not permit particular conclusions about Israel's relationships with Moab and Ammon. 40 Third, in their primary concern with the offences of Judah and Israel, the prophetic books make accusations against them in the same language they use against their neighbours, e.g. the recurring accusations against Moab and Ammon and Israel of arrogance and scorn (Isa 16:6; compare Hos 5:5; Jer 13:9; Zech 9:6; 10:11).

A window upon the Persian period is provided by the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The crisis resulting from intermarriage between Israelites and various immigrants is reflected in the report: 'Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod (in Philistia), and they could not speak the

Reference in the same verse to 'the people of Seth' may refer to the Arabian expansion that occurred around the time of the conquest of Judah by Babylon.

39 Van Zyl (1960: 150-160) reviews the historical evidences of this period. Perhaps Israel suffered from alliances Moab and Ammon made with Assyria and Babylonia.

40 It appears that Ammon was able for a time to occupy the traditional territory of Gad east of Jordan (Jer 49:1-6; Zeph 2:8-11). However, Knauf (1992b) argues that historical and geographical references in these verses apply more suitably to Moab.
language of Judah, but spoke the language of various peoples' (NRSV; Neh 13:24). Both Ezra and Nehemiah refer to inter-marriage with Ammon and Moab, especially among leading families (Neh 13:23-25; Ezra 9:1-2). In the latter text, Ezra adds the Moabites and Ammonites to the list of the nations of Canaan whom the Israelites were forbidden to marry (cf. Deut 7:1-3). To support the elimination of mixed marriages of all kinds, Nehemiah resorts to the tradition in Deuteronomy 23 which excludes Moab and Ammon from the community of Israel (Neh 13:1-3), although the rationale there regarding hospitality is not especially relevant to the post-exilic situation. The strength of opposition to intermarriage is shown in the reports that Nehemiah reprimanded the husbands, cursed and beat them and pulled out their hair (Neh 13:23-25).

It is apparent that the reports of hostile encounters often reflect some ambiguity as to whether Israel or one of her neighbours was the aggressor in any particular case. A conception of antagonism seems to have become a formal posture which is rehearsed in the texts, especially in the prophetic literature, without reference to events that justify it. I now treat other reports of co-operative dealings that cast further light on the accounts of hostility.

Accounts of peaceful relationships

An eirenic attitude on the part of Moab toward Israel at their first encounter is portrayed in Jephthah's appeal for peace to the king of Ammon. Jephthah's claim that king Balak of Moab never fought against Israel (Judges 11:25) is consistent with the account that the Moabites were afraid of the Israelites and unwilling to fight (Num 22:3) but clearly contradicts the report of Joshua 24:9 where the same verb 'fought' appears (laham, in Niphal form, to make war, to devour). Reference to this encounter in Deuteronomy 23 condemns Moab (and also Ammon) for their lack of hospitality toward Israel, which implies indifference rather than warfare.

Peaceful relationships are also reflected in accounts of personal co-operation and intermarriage that contrast with reports of conflict on a corporate level. Stories of internal conflict within Israel over who had the right to reign, report that David was dependent upon the support of the royal houses of Moab and Ammon. When David is under threat from King Saul and unsure of continuing protection from the Philistines in Gath, we read that he arranged for the king of Moab to accommodate his parents (1 Sam 22:3, 4). Later, when David is a fugitive from his son Absalom

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41 Clines (1981:115) considers the intermarriage law of Nehemiah as a development of the laws in Exod 34:16 and Deut 7:3. The former restricts only Israelite men but the latter applies also to the women. The way the ancient prohibition is broadened in Nehemiah appears to me to be an early example of what Jewish tradition refers to as a fence around the law. As Clines and also Williamson (1985:130-1) argue, intermarriage was not a concern as a racial issue but because it threatened the integrity of the community and culture of Israel.
and flees across the Jordan, we find the report that Shobi, son of Nahash of Ammon, met him with food and bedding (2 Sam 17:27ff). In the first case, David is supported as an insurgent against Saul and in the second he is supported against the insurgency of Absalom. These accounts acknowledge that through the operation of personal loyalty, the royal houses of Moab and Ammon had a direct influence on the rise and fall of monarchy in Israel, balancing somewhat other reports of Israelite hegemony over Moab and Ammon.

The importance of loyalty (Heb. hesed) is stated explicitly regarding David's relationship to Nahash and may be inferred regarding Shobi (2 Sam 10:2). Personal loyalty is also indicated in reports of foreign soldiers recruited by David, including Zelek the Ammonite (2 Sam 23:37) and Ithmah from Moab (1 Chron 11:46). In other accounts, this loyalty is represented by intermarriage. David's son Solomon reportedly took wives from both Moab and Ammon (1 Kings 11:1) one of whom was Naamah, an Ammonitess, the mother of Rehoboam (1 Kings 14:21, 31). These marriage reports are consistent with the lack of any accounts of battles with foreigners during the reign of Solomon. They also illustrate an established pattern reported by the Chronicler (1 Chron 4:21-3; 8:8; see below).

The continuing significance of links between the royal houses of Israel and her neighbours is portrayed in a story of the Babylonian era. Moab and Ammon are first to be mentioned as neighbours who protected Judean refugees following the fall of Jerusalem (Jer 40:11f). Both Gedaliah the governor (40:9) and Jeremiah the prophet (29: 4-7; 42:10-11) advise exiled Jews to settle down and live as good citizens (29:4-7), but this policy was opposed by Ishmael of the Judean royal house. With a group of Jewish resistance fighters, Ishmael took refuge with King Baalis of Ammon and orchestrated the murder of Gedaliah. In this way the Ammonites, who may have been free from Babylonian control at this time, supported opponents of Jeremiah's policy of accommodation.

Reports of eirenic attitudes on the part of Moab and Ammon are matched by similar reports concerning Israel. Despite the hostility envisaged in the Song of Moses, the account of Num 21:10-13; 22:1 reports that Israel arrived at the Jordan on the Plains of Moab Israel without engaging

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42 These reports reflect the Deuteronomic concern with the centralisation of worship in Jerusalem. See e.g. Deut 12:1-5; 16:4-5.

43 We find reference only to enmity with Hadad of Edom and Rezon of Damascus (1 Kings 11:14-25). Solomon is reported to have controlled a vast territory from the river Euphrates to the Egyptian border (1 Kings 4:21), indicating peaceful coexistence based on economic dominance.
Moab in warfare.\textsuperscript{44} A deliberate strategy of peace towards Moab is suggested by Israel's contrasting earlier treatment of the Amorites living north of the Moabite border along the river Arnon (Num 21:21-35), whose land they occupied with bloodshed.\textsuperscript{45} The story of Jephthah states explicitly that Israel had asked Moab for right of passage (Judges 11:17). A similar tradition is presented by the Chronicler within the prayer of Jehoshaphat as he faces the combined threat of Moab and Ammon (2 Chron 20:10f). This co-operative tradition is further elaborated in Deut 2:29, 37 where YHWH declares to Moses that the lands of Moab and Ammon are inviolable (Deut 2:9, 19). In this ideology, the strongest hostile traditions noted above are matched by a most emphatic eirenic tradition.

The eirenic traditions relating to the settlement era are matched by those of the prophetic traditions. Within a heart-rending picture of great devastation in Moab, the oracle of Isaiah 15-16 twice expresses solidarity with Israel's neighbour in groans of sadness (15:5; 16:9-11), despite their pride and conceit (Isa 16:6), and shows sympathy towards the Moabites fleeing for refuge to Israel (Isa 16:1-4) and to Zoar (16:9-11). These observations suggest divine compassion towards those outside Israel. Isaiah, like Amos earlier, is more concerned to gain the attention of Judeans regarding the danger facing them from Assyria than to condemn her neighbours. It is surprising to find that the strong condemnation of both Moab and Ammon found in Jeremiah is matched by oracles which affirm that finally YHWH will release Moab and Ammon from captivity (Jer 48:47; 49:6).\textsuperscript{46} The survival of Moab and Ammon is attributed to the divine will, using precisely the language of return

\textsuperscript{44} We read that Israel bypassed Moab by going through the desert to the east (Num 21:10-20; 33:44). Similarly in the case of Edom, it is Israel who seeks to avoid battle and chooses to circumnavigate that territory when permission is refused (Num 20:14-21).

\textsuperscript{45} The River Jabbok on the border of Ammon defined the extent of Israel's conquest of the Amorites around Heshbon (Num 21:24; Josh 12:2, 13:10). The Israelites first encounter of conflict is reported earlier, namely their attempt to invade Canaan from the south (Num 14:39-45) when they are routed by the Amalekites and Canaanites. A parallel account in Num 21:1-3 gives victory to the Israelites, but in both cases it is the Canaanites who begin the attack.

\textsuperscript{46} John Bright (1965: 322-6) asserts that these texts are in prose form, distinct from the poetic form preceding them, and suggests they are later additions to the prophecies from a post-exilic view.
found in prophetic announcements regarding Israel.\textsuperscript{47} A similar explanation may hold for a passing reference to Moab and Ammon in Daniel 11:41.\textsuperscript{48}

The concern with separation from foreigners that dominates parts of Ezra and Nehemiah reveals the social reality that accommodation with foreigners was the popular norm among all sections of society (Ezra 9-10; Neh 9:1-2; 10:1-31; 13:1-3, 23-28). This accommodation is highlighted by the opposition of significant Jewish leaders to the policy of separation of mixed marriages, namely, Meshullam and Shabbethai (Ezra 10:15).\textsuperscript{49} Their presence at the initial reading of the Torah by Ezra adds the weight of personal faithfulness to their later stance of opposition (Neh 8:4, 7).\textsuperscript{50} The polarity of viewpoints about intermarriage appears to be reflected in the text of Nehemiah 8:1-12 where the repentance of the people following the reading of the Torah does not seem to extend to mixed marriages. The people were urged to go home and celebrate, presumably regardless of

\textsuperscript{47} See Zeph 2:7 and 3:20; Deut 30:3; Jer 30:3, 18, 31:23; 29:14; 33:11; Ezek 39:25. In all these texts we find the noun סֻּלּות (captive) forming a pun with the verb סָלָה (to turn). See Martin-Achard (1984: 67). The restoration of Elam is affirmed using the same terms (Jer 49:39). This usage does not appear in Isaiah.

\textsuperscript{48} Daniel 11 contains lengthy and detailed historical information that can be identified with events of the second century BCE. The verse indicates that Edom, Moab and Ammon survived the onslaught of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164). Peake Pasha (1958: 22) describes how the area of Ammon was eventually Hellenised and absorbed into the federation of the Decapolis. Moab was included in Idumaea when Antiochus took control and was absorbed into the Nabataean kingdom centred in Petra. Bright’s assertion (1965: 323, 327) that Moab and Ammon lost separate existence when they were absorbed into the expanding Arabian domain need not imply that these peoples no longer had some separate identity.

\textsuperscript{49} Williamson (1985: 156) prefers the alternative view that the opponents wanted a more rigorous, immediate resolution of the issue than that proposed (Ezra 10:13-4). However, this disregards the reports that many leaders were among the offenders and that a more moderate policy would have been preferred.

\textsuperscript{50} Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite may be identified among those who shared in teaching the people (Neh 8:4 & 7). A precise identification of Meshullam is complicated by reference to several men of the same name, including two priests and a temple guard (Neh 3:6, 11:7; 12:13, 16, 25; Ezra 10:29). However, it seems most likely that the Meshullam opposed to the rejection of mixed marriages was the father-in-law of Tobiah’s son, Johanan, Meshullam the son of Berechiah (Neh 6:18). He was one of the team leaders in rebuilding the wall (Neh 3:4, 30), who may also be identified with the Meshullam married to a foreigner (Ezra 10:29).
whether their wives were foreign or not (Neh 8:1-12). Does this account represent an authorial intention different from that elsewhere in the book?

An eirenic view of mixed marriages is provided by unique reports in the books of Chronicles where we read that in 'ancient times' the descendants of Judah took Moabite wives and settled in Bethlehem (1 Chron 4:21-3).\(^{51}\) Equally relevant is the report that Shaharaim of Benjamin, the tribe most closely linked to Judah, settled and married in Moab (1 Chron 8:8). Members of this clan reportedly moved out of Benjamite territory to live in Manahath, just a few kilometres from Bethlehem.\(^{52}\) The elaboration by Dyck (1996) of the twin concerns of the Chronicler concerning the identity and legitimacy of the post-exilic Jewish community is relevant here. Although he attends solely to the question of the northern Israelites in the community, the references to marriages with eastern neighbours illustrate Dyck's argument that the Chronicler espouses a broader conception of ethnicity than the authors of Ezra-Nehemiah.

The disparity between the official rejection of mixed marriages and the popular acceptance of foreigners among the Jews is colourfully presented in the story of Tobiah, an Ammonite who was accepted at the very centre of the community. Tobiah was an agent of Sanballat, the governor of Judah living in Samaria (Neh 2:10), who had gained the loyalty of various Jewish authorities and maintained considerable correspondence with them (6:17-19). Both Tobiah and his son had married into leading Jewish families and found this an advantage in their dealings (6:18).\(^{53}\) Tobiah also developed an amicable relationship with the Jewish priest, Eliashib, and occupied a furnished room in the Temple compound until Nehemiah threw his things out to make the room available to the Levites (13:1-9). Tobiah learnt about Nehemiah rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and attempted to stop him by marshalling the opposition of non-Jewish residents from Samaria, Arabia, Ammon and

\(^{51}\) In his discussion of Israelite kinship structures, Terry Prewitt (1981: 94) raises the hypothesis of a cyclic connubium headed by Terah, in which the sons of Jacob would be considered as wife givers for the sons of Lot. However, this pattern is opposite to what is recorded by the Chronicler and also in the story of Ruth. There is no basis for Prewitt's assertion that such marriages were ruled out because of the incest of Genesis 19 and because the sons of Lot were uncircumcised.

\(^{52}\) Historical clan links between Manahath and Bethlehem are traced to Salma, grandson of Caleb, who founded Bethlehem and was the ancestor of the Zorite clan of Manahath (1 Chron 2:50-54).

\(^{53}\) In the cases of Tobiah and his son, the foreigner in the marriage was the male, which does not appear to be covered by the policy of Ezra (Ezra 9:2). Apart from these two mixed marriages only one other is specifically noted in Ezra and Nehemiah, namely the marriage of the grandson of Eliashib the High Priest to the daughter of Sanballat (Neh 13:28).
Philistia. He later attempted to scare Nehemiah with a threat of assassination (6:1-14). It is possible that Tobiah acted with the tacit approval of some of the key Jewish leaders he dealt with so closely.

The book of Ruth also provides a positive view of intermarriage, opposite to that of Ezra and Nehemiah. During a time of famine in Israel, the family of Elimelech and Naomi moved from Bethlehem to Moab where they could find food. Their two sons marry Moabite women and the crisis of the story comes once the father and the sons have all died leaving the young wives childless. Naomi decides to return to Bethlehem where she has at least some land, whereupon one of the two daughters-in-law, Ruth, decides to go with her. As one among the poor, Ruth is eligible to glean in the barley fields (Lev 19:9-10), through which she meets the owner, Boaz, whom she marries. In their discussion of narrative features in the Hebrew Bible, Gunn and Fewell (1993: 163) note the repetitive reference to Ruth the Moabite that pushes the issue of Israelite prejudice into the foreground. Over against this prejudice, the story of Ruth twice legitimates intermarriage with Moabites, first by Israelites in a foreign land and then by one living in Judah.

The approval of intermarriage is strengthened by two statements of blessing. In a three-fold blessing upon the new couple, the elders pray for wealth and a large family (Ruth 4:11), invoking the memory of Rachel and Leah, and of Tamar and Judah as examples of fruitful reproduction. After the birth of the first male child, the women echo the earlier blessing as they rejoice that YHWH has provided a 'kinsman' for Naomi, who will restore and nourish her life (4:14f). The ideology of the story of Ruth is cemented by a genealogical note which closes the book, identifying king David as a great-grandson of Boaz and Ruth, i.e. of Moabite descent by three generations. David's acceptance in the congregation of Israel effectively places the Moabites (and presumably the Ammonites) in the same category as Edom and Egypt, who had access to the congregation after three generations. In this way the book of Ruth undercuts not only Nehemiah's rejection of mixed marriages but also the law of Deuteronomy 23 which excluded Moabites and Ammonites from the worshipping congregation of Israel.

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54 These antagonists desisted from their threat to attack Jerusalem when they found Nehemiah had armed the builders (Neh 2:19; 4:1-8). The book of Ezra details earlier opposition to the rebuilding of the Temple but does not indicate what groups the opponents belonged to (Ezra 4-6).

55 The final four verses trace the genealogy further back to Perez, and thus repeat the Davidic descent.

56 Van Zyl (1960: 13) treats the case of David as an exception but does not consider the ideological intention to advocate a contrary view.
Summary

The analysis reveals that Tanakh traditions about Israel's relations with Moab and Ammon encompass both hostile and crenic viewpoints and that initiatives of either kind may arise from either side of the Jordan. This variety is evident in texts relating to all periods of Israelite history and in the case of the initial encounter on the Plains of Moab, includes contradictory traditions. Biblical and extra-biblical accounts of these small states highlight their warrior culture. Against this background, the few reports of violent struggle and atrocity seem rather infrequent. Accounts of the relationship of the northern and southern tribes of Israel provide another benchmark against which relationships to the east appear comparatively benign, considering that inherent antipathies ensured that the united kingdom lasted but a few decades.  

The extended oracles of condemnation throughout the prophetic books perhaps gave rise to the conventional designations in commentaries of Moab and Ammon as Israel’s traditional enemies. However, these oracles lack specificity and reflect formalised national posturing rather than physical strife. They fail to acknowledge the positive role played by the royal houses in the record of David's court. Such oracles must be read in the light of the condemnation of Israel, which dominates over the treatment of other nations.

It is significant that both crenic and hostile reports of Israel's relationships with her eastern neighbours direct the reader to common underlying values, namely hospitality, land ownership and kinship. In regard to hospitality, the range of Tanakh references to crenic relationships more than offsets the quantity of hostile references, among which the examples of personal hospitality between Israel and the east stand out. In the case of land settlement, the accounts of attempts by Israel and her neighbours to subjugate one another are unremarkable, as are the prophetic condemnations of Moab and Ammon in this regard. However, the Deuteronomic respect for the lands of Edom, Moab

57 Some explanation of cooperative attitudes between Israel and her eastern neighbours is offered by recent research which acknowledges the incorporation into Israel of various groups in addition to those of the Exodus (Gottwald: 1979). Moabites and Ammonites may have been included among these groups, although there is no evidence to hand. Such inclusion would be consistent with the assertion of Boling (1988: 51) that Israelite settlement in the former eastern territories of Sihon and Og (Num 21:21-35) may reflect a transfer of allegiance to Yahwism among the general population. In this pre-national era, subgroups within Moab and Ammon may well have had different allegiances.

and Ammon, which I treat in later chapters, is unexpected and places these nations in a special relationship to Israel.

Behind the various accounts of both hospitality and land settlement lie particular conceptions of the relationship between Israel and Moab and Ammon, although these conceptions are not often made explicit. The accusation that Moab treated Israel like any other nation (Ezek 25:8) suggests a kinship relationship between them. However, the substantial condemnations of Moab and Ammon that appear in Jeremiah and Ezekiel are predicated on other offences. The condemnation of inhospitality found in Deut 23:3-4 also hints at kinship. So Leibowitz (1981: 132) notes that the exclusion of Moab and Ammon from the congregation of Israel is based not on a tradition of warfare between them and Israel but on a tradition of co-operation that had not been maintained.

The variety of notices of intermarriage from various eras of Israelite history, and particularly the accounts of hospitality offered by royalty in Moab and Ammon, reflect a notion of kinship between Israel and her neighbours. This notion is highlighted by the account of David's Moabite ancestry (Ruth 4:17), and by a tradition indicating his links to the royal house of Ammon: Rogerson and Davies (1989: 48-50) note that David's sister, Abigail, was the daughter of Nahash (2 Sam 17:25; 1 Chron 2:13-17) and it is reasonable to assume that this Nahash was the king of Ammon who appears in the same literary context (2 Sam 17:27). These notices can be reconciled by the conclusion that the mother of Abigail and of David was at different times married to Nahash and Jesse.

The various indications of kinship that appear in the stories of Israel and her neighbours reflect the tradition of Genesis that Moab and Ammon were kin to Israel through their common descent from Terah via Lot and Abraham respectively. Here we must distinguish two elements, first, the descent of Moab and Ammon from Lot, and second, the kinship between Lot and Abraham. The first of these elements appears only in Genesis 19 and Deuteronomy 2 but there is no genealogy in Tanakh tracing the line of descent from Lot. Kinship between Lot and Abraham is affirmed only

59 The asymmetry found in the prophetic books between the designations 'Moab' and 'the sons of Ammon' also appears in both Genesis and Deuteronomy. In the personal names found in Genesis 19, the younger is named not zammon, but ben zammi (son of my people) and is identified not as 'the father of Ammon' (which would match Moab as 'the father of Moab' in the previous verse) but as 'the father of the sons of Ammon'. The designation 'sons of Moab' appears only in 2 Chron 20:1. For some reason the element 'son' is not carried forward in the tribal name 'Ammon' (contrast the name 'Ben-jamin').

60 Peake Pasha (1958: 141) documents the genealogies of tribal groups living in the areas of ancient Moab and Ammon. While some link back to Ishmael, there are no links to Lot.
in Genesis 11-14 and outside of the Torah there is a notable absence of appeal to a kinship relationship. Given this paucity of data, we may not assume that such a kinship link was generally recognised by biblical narrators. I will therefore treat it as a particular view of the narrators of Genesis 19 and Deuteronomy 2, to which I return in later chapters.

2. Conceptions of divinity and cultic practice

The review of biblical material in this section has two distinct elements. One concerns the reported similarities between Israelite conceptions of divinity and cult and those of Moab and Ammon, both of which affirm a link between god and land and encompass concepts of a warrior god. Alongside these symmetrical features, and often intertwined with them in Tanakh, are the asymmetrical components representing purely Israelite conceptions of herself and her neighbours in relation to YHWH. These relationships are expressed in terms of blessing and curse and the prospect of divine restoration of lands.

Symmetrical features

The biblical affirmation of YHWH as God of Israel is matched in several ways by Mesha’s references to his god, Kemosh. The Moabite god Kemosh is found in five different contexts in Tanakh. The Ammonite god, Milcom, (sometimes named Molech) is first identified along with Kemosh in 1 Kings 11:5 & 7 and appears in six settings in Tanakh. From the viewpoint of Israel, Moab is described as ‘the people of Kemosh’ (Num 21:29; Jer 48:46), just as Israel is described in Deuteronomic language as ‘the people of YHWH’ and ‘the people of God’. In the small compass of the Mesha Inscription, these particular phrases do not appear although YHWH is mentioned as god of Israel. Presumably Moab and Ammon also identified themselves and their neighbours in terms of

61 One other reference to the sons of Lot appears in Ps 83:8 which no doubt indicates Moab and Ammon although this identification is not explicit. More importantly, this verse does not assert any kinship between the sons of Lot and Israel, which therefore may not be presumed.

62 Miller (1992b: 892) notes that the god Kemosh (sometimes Kamish) is attested in texts from Babylon, Ugarit and Ebla and from Sakkar in Egypt. The name appears theophorically, as found in the city named Carchemish, in parallel with biblical names using El and Yah.

63 The frequencies of these two alternative references are surprisingly small, namely five and two respectively. Following the reception of the Torah, Moses proclaims: ‘This day you have become the people of YHWH your God’ (Deut 27:9). Subsequent references denote Israel in battle (Judg 5:11; 20:2; 2 Sam 1:12) and David and Jehu as rulers of the people of YHWH (2 Sam 6:21; 14:13; 2 Kings 9:6). The final reference in Ezekiel 36:20 envisages the ridicule other nations will cast at the people of YHWH.
their divinities. It appears that the Moabite religion had a priestly class like that in Israel: on the one hand there is a reference to priests of Kemosh in Jer 48:7 and on the other hand, the Mesha Inscription refers to divination in the words 'Chemosh said'.

The territorial element found in both religions appears in the story of Jephthah's attempt to dissuade the king of Ammon from battle with Israel. Jephthah makes a pragmatic argument that just as Ammon would keep any land their god Kemosh [sic] might give them, so Israel intended to do the same (Judges 11:24).\textsuperscript{64} Whatever Jephthah may have thought, this reference indicates that for the Ammonites, Milcom, like YHWH, was a god of a land. The territorial element also appears where Jeremiah describes the Ammonite occupation of Israelite territory in Gad, east of Jordan, as an action of the god Milcom and portrays the demise of Ammon in terms of their god, Milcom, going into exile together with his priests and his princes (Jer 49:1-6). Similar terms appear in oracles about Moab and their god (Jer 48:7). YHWH will end the worship of Kemosh (v. 35) by making Moab disillusioned with their god (v.13). The reference to Moabites offering sacrifices and incense to their gods on high places reflects both the territorial element and a similarity between the Israelite and Moabite cults.\textsuperscript{65}

Within Tanakh, the territorial conception of the various divinities is not limited to national boundaries, as shown especially in the story of Solomon who provided for the veneration of gods other than YHWH (1 Kings 11:4-8). The text acknowledges that the common people followed Solomon in worshipping Kemosh and Milcom along with other gods (1 Kings 11:33) and showed no exclusive loyalty to YHWH prior to the exile, more than three hundred years later (2 Kings 23:13f). A brief notice in Zephaniah 1:5 states that the Israelites sometimes took oaths in the name of Milcom while continuing to worship YHWH. These reports from the era of the kingdom are consistent with accounts of the era of Israelite settlement, which acknowledge that the Israelites had no hesitation in worshiping the Canaanite gods, Baal and Astarte.\textsuperscript{66} Accounts of all periods

\textsuperscript{64} We know from other references that Kemosh was in fact the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of Ammon. The apparent recognition of a foreign god by Jephthah might be dismissed as sarcasm except that the very context of Judges shows that the Israelites at this time had no conception of monotheism, let alone loyalty to one god among many.

\textsuperscript{65} Isaiah 16:12 confirms the role of hilltop shrines in Moabite religion. See Mattingly (1989):

\textsuperscript{66} In Judges, where the influence of foreign gods is blamed for Israelite woes, the gods of Moab and Ammon do not feature, only Baal and Astarte (Judg 2:11, 13; 3:7; 6:25; 8:33; 9:4; 10:10). Among thirteen references in Joshua and Judges to gods other than YHWH, the gods of Moab and Ammon are mentioned only once, along with other gods (Judg 10:6). The story of Baal Peor in Numbers 25 refers first to Moab but then treats Israelite relations with Midian and their worship of Baal, not Kemosh. Kidner (1967: 136) is on weak ground where he asserts that Lot's legacy in Moab and
indicate that Israel persistently acknowledged the power of certain gods beyond the cultic community of Yahwism. The readiness of Israel to worship these gods is portrayed by the term 'whoredom' (zanah; Num 25:1-3 and numerous later texts). The worship of YHWH by Moabites and Ammonites is not explicitly stated in Tanakh but is implied by Deut 23:3.

The Mesha Inscription and the Tanakh record both portray military campaigns in similar religious terms. The acknowledgement on both sides of several gods raises the question as to who was the more powerful in battle. This issue is first posed in the story of Jephthah and the reader discovers that in this case the result went in favour of Israel (Judg 11:32f). Warfare as a struggle between gods is symbolised by king David who took from the booty he captured at Rabbah the gold crown from the head of the god, Milcom, and placed it on his own head. These examples illustrate how the entire structure of the book of Judges and of the Deuteronomistic court history (Dt Jr) is built upon the repeated assertion that YHWH had the power to dispose battles in favour of either Israel or her opponents.67 But this is also precisely the conception documented on the Mesha Stele. Mesha attributes Moab's earlier oppression by Israel to the anger of the god Kemosh, and her subsequent victories to the help of Kemosh.

The warrior gods of both Moab and Israel are also fearsome, as illustrated in the common practice of devotion to fire (herem) of captured booty and prisoners.68 The Mesha Stele reports that Mesha so devoted the western cities of Atarot and Nebo which he seized from Israel. The conception of an angry deity lies behind accounts of the sacrifice of children within both Israel and Moab. To forestall a victory by Israel, king Mesha sacrifices his son on the wall (2 Kings 3:26-27).69 Two summary accounts state that a similar practice had also been followed by the people in both the northern and southern kingdoms (2 Kings 17:17, 31; Jer 32:35) and it was sufficiently established to warrant two distinct prohibitions in Leviticus 18:21 and 20:2-5. In particular the accounts of the

Ammon was destined to provide the worst carnal seduction in the history of Israel, referring to Baal Peor.

67 The influence of foreign religion is both foreshadowed and summarised in Judges 2:11-23. While Judges describes only righteous warrior leaders who retrieve Israel from the results of apostasy, the books of Kings acknowledge that only a minority of the kings were committed to the cult of Yahweh.

68 This practice is required of Israel in Deut 7:2; 20:17; Jud 21:11 and reported in the earliest accounts of their warfare with the Amorites, Sihon (2:34) and Og (3:6) and frequently in Joshua (2:10; 11:21). In other accounts the practice is not followed (1 Sam 15:9, 21; 1 Kings 9:21).

69 Margalit (1986) identifies a text from Ugarit which describes such a sacrifice in a similar situation of siege as an act of sacrificial warfare.
kings of Judah, Ahaz (732-715) and Manasseh (686-642), and the record of Josiah's reforms describe
the passing of children through fire to the god Milcom at Topheth (2 Kings 16:3; 21:6; 23:10 &
13).70

Asymmetrical features

Against the symmetry of conceptions of divinity and of cultic practice, certain asymmetrical
elements in other texts stand out, firstly in the story of Balaam. The theme of divine blessing and
curse is the key feature of this account of Israel's first contact with Moab (Num 22) and appears
eight times in the story and oracles. This theme is highlighted by the literary structure of the
account, which has two carefully structured main sections, each containing three divine oracles
relating to the theme of blessing.71 The repeated but thwarted request of king Barak that Balaam
curse Israel reflects an Israelite conception of the power inherent in the pronouncement and
immediately implies that blessing and curse is just as important to Moab as it is to Israel.72 In vain,
Barak leads Balaam to successive high points but at each point Balaam refuses to curse and instead,
on the second and third occasions, he proclaims the blessing of Israel.

The lack of any reference in the story to the god of Moab, let alone to his power to curse, highlights
the interest of the story in the status of YHWH among the Moabites. Although the curse is
understood by Barak at first as a power intrinsic to the prophet Balaam (Num 22:6), the words of

70 The practice of sacrifice by fire at Topheth, found in the story of Josiah, is attested separately in
Jeremiah 7:31-32 although there it is not linked to Milcom or any other particular god. Some of the
references to fire sacrifices may refer to symbolic rather than actual sacrifice. However, after tracing
the biblical accounts of child sacrifice and related rituals, Levenson (1993b: 52) concludes that the
sacrifice of the first born son in Israel was not eradicated until late in the era of the kingdom of
Judah. In regard to the religion of Milcom, the prophet Zephaniah is silent about child sacrifice.
Perhaps the excesses of king Manasseh did not carry through into the time of Zephaniah during the
early reign of Josiah.

71 The first section describes three stages leading up to Balaam's meeting with Barak. Each stage
leads to a divine oracle, the first warning Balaam not to curse Israel and the others warning him to
say only what God or the angel of YHWH tell him. The second section describes how Barak took
Balaam to three successive hill tops at each of which seven altars were built on each of which a bull
and ram were sacrificed. Oracles also feature in each part of the second section. While the oracles
of the first section are in the mouth of God, in narrative form, the oracles of the second section are
in the mouth of Balaam and in poetic form. A fourth oracle in the final part appears superfluous
and may have a close link to Psalm 110 (Milgrom; 1989: 322, n. 45).

72 The same viewpoint appears in the story of Isaac and Esau (Gen 27:34-40).
Balaam immediately describe the curse as the prerogative of YHWH (22:8). Subsequently Barak affirms this viewpoint in speeches which acknowledge the Israelite god as YHWH (23:17) and as Elohim (23:27). The asymmetrical ideology of Israel is made explicit in the climax of the story in the third oracle where Moab is recognised as the first foreign nation to hear that blessing and curse are a function of one's relationship to Israel (Num 24:9b). From this viewpoint there is irony in king Barak's repeated attempts to have Israel cursed which, according to the third oracle, would only result in a curse on himself.\(^{73}\)

A special status for Moab and Ammon is made quite explicit in the territorial viewpoint of the oracles in Deuteronomy 2 which declare that the possession of their lands by Moab and Ammon, like that of Israel, is legitimated by YHWH, not by their own gods (Deut 2:9, 19). Both oracles have the following form:

> The Lord said to me, 'Do not harass Moab or engage them in battle, for I will not give you any of its land as a possession, since I have given Ar as a possession to the descendants of Lot.' (NRSV Deut 2:9).\(^{74}\)

The unusual antiquarian notes later in Deuteronomy 2 extend the parallel further, declaring that Moab and Ammon had gained their lands as a possession from YHWH by dispossessing the original inhabitants just as Israel had done (2:12, 21-22).\(^{75}\) The term for possession derives from the verb yaraš (to occupy) which is the same term used by the Deuteronomists to signify Canaan as the promised land of Israel (Deut 2:12; Josh 1:15; 12:6f).\(^{76}\) Repetition is used to emphasise the grant of land as a 'possession', first denying the land to Israel and then confirming it to the sons of Lot. The

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\(^{73}\) The ironic and satirical aspects of the story of Balaam are elaborated by Douglas (1993: 216-234).  

\(^{74}\) Smelik (1992: 27) agrees with van Seters that these traditions are among the oldest in Deuteronomy. They differ from the report of Joshua 13:23-25 that certain Ammonite lands were allocated to the tribes of Gad and Reuben.  

\(^{75}\) This is a deduction made from the neat literary sequence of Deut 2:12 & 21f. The Edomites dispossessed the Horites, just as Israel did the Canaanites in the land YHWH gave them, and YHWH destroyed the Zambuzzimim, whom Ammon dispossessed, just as he did for the Edomites. While the Moabites are not specifically included in this logical deduction, we may assume the editor intends the reader to see the work of YHWH in the dispossession of the Emim as well.  

\(^{76}\) The assertion of divine control over the dispensation of earthly lands may be a sign of prophetic influence upon the Deuteronomistic reform. The same ideology underlies an oracle from Jeremiah, following the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar, which advises local kings to submit to Babylon (Jer 27:1 - 11).
rejection of conflict over land is also emphasised by repetition using the two verbs: harass and provoke. The declarations about land that are found in these oracles distinguish Moab and Ammon (along with Edom, Deut 2: 4-5) from all other neighbours of Israel.

As von Rad (1966: 42) indicates, the alternative terms 'Moabite' and 'Ammonite' which appear in the antiquarian notes of Deuteronomy 2 show that they probably have a later provenance. If so, the appearance in both the oracles and the notes of the same viewpoint about the land shows that this ideology regarding Moab and Ammon was not limited to just one era in Israelite historiography and that it represents a deliberate emphasis upon the gift ideology in the final redaction.

The positive implications of Deuteronomy 2 regarding Moab and Ammon contrast with the equally distinctive but negative implications in the cultic law of Israel regarding the exclusion of certain categories from the congregation of Israel (Deut 23:1-9). Their linkage here with men who have had their testicles or their penis cut off and those born out of wedlock would seem rather arbitrary unless it is to suggest there is something illegitimate about Moab and Ammon. The singular nature of this reference is apparent in two ways. First, their exclusion is highlighted against the repeated emphasis of Deuteronomy upon including strangers in the community because Israel were themselves once strangers in Egypt. Second, there seems to be no obvious basis for the distinction between Moab and Ammon on one side and those of Edomite and Egyptian descent on the other.

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77 These literary features are absent from the oracle concerning Edom but instead we find a repetition of the Edomites' status as brothers of Israel (Deut 2:4, 8). In place of 'do not harass' we have a different warning regarding Edom: 'Take heed to yourselves therefore'. The different elements of the oracle about Edom seem to reflect that the close relation assumed between Israel and Edom was not taken for granted in the case of Moab and Ammon. As the children of Lot are two further steps removed from Israel in the biblical genealogy, the gift of their land and its protection required special emphasis.

78 The land ideology of Deuteronomy is treated by Habel (1995: 36-53) as a matter of conditional grant that represents a charter of entitlement, justifies dispossession and represents Israel's indebtedness to YHWH. However, it is not apparent in Deuteronomy 2 that any conditions or indebtedness adhere to Moab and Ammon, even though their land possession is described in similar terms. Like Habel, Joosten (1996:181-189) recognises a variety of land ideologies in the Torah. He concludes that Leviticus 25 represents a pre-exilic view of the land as a sacral entity, the dwelling place of YHWH, of which Israel has title only in a religious sense. Such a view clearly differs from that of Deuteronomy 2, even though both texts speak of divine gift and human possession.

79 In parallel lines of verse the exclusion is said to be until the tenth generation, and forever.

(23:7), especially as the Egyptians are elsewhere described as oppressors in 4:40 and 26:6. The distinct treatment of Moab and Ammon in Deuteronomy 23 contrasts with the common treatment of them along with Israel and other nations in the judgement oracle of Jer 9:25-26. This text also refers to Moab and Ammon as circumcised, with the implication that they were expected to keep the covenant that this symbolised.

The apparent opposition between the above Deuteronomic texts is partly resolved by the common implication of both that a special relationship existed between Israel and Moab and Ammon, which brought to the latter peoples (as to Israel) both benefits and corresponding judgement. Such a relationship is also represented by Jeremiah's common treatment of Moab and Israel. On the one hand he describes Moab as rebellious against YHWH (Jer 48:26, 42) and the Babylonian devastation of Moab and Ammon as the work of YHWH (48:35, 40, 44; 49:2)\(^1\). On the other hand, Jeremiah includes Moab and Ammon (and some other nations) in his vision of restoration (Jer 48:47; 49:6).\(^2\)

**Summary**

The above analysis of religious elements in the stories of Israel and of Moab and Ammon reveals a symmetry in regard to some of their conceptions of divinity and in their religious practice as well as in the absence on both sides of loyalty to a single cult. The asymmetrical elements illustrate ways in which Israelite ideology was applied equally to her eastern neighbours, thus incorporating them to a significant degree into the cultic patterns of Israel. The appellation of distinct divine names is the only major difference between the cults of Israel, Moab and Ammon recognised in the Tanakh texts.\(^3\) Only in Deuteronomy 23 do we find an explicit rejection of Moab and Ammon from the religious community of Israel, and this is based not upon any cultic considerations but on the failure to exercise hospitality.

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\(^1\) Bright (1965: 322-3) suggests that Jeremiah may refer to Moab betraying Judah into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar.

\(^2\) A similar hopeful note appears in Daniel 11:42, which envisages the escape of Moab and Ammon, with Edom, from destruction by Antiochus Epiphanies. However, this verse makes no reference to a divine viewpoint or intervention.

\(^3\) A control for this assertion is provided by religious elements found in reports of military campaigns by Hammurabi and of Cyrus which incorporate both ethical and vocational elements similar to those in Tanakh but attributed to the god Marduk rather than Yahweh. In his law code, Hammurabi claims a commission from Marduk to guide the people aright and to bring justice for the weak, the orphan and the widow. Almost 2000 years later Cyrus declares that at the command of Marduk, he peacefully resettled deportees from an earlier period, along with images of their various gods. See Finegan (1959: 59, 229).
The evidence of both parts of this chapter shows that an eirenic viewpoint in Israel dominates over a hostile view of Moab and Ammon. Clearly only some Tanakh references to Moab and Ammon serve as a foil to the ideology of Israel's election. Elsewhere the notion of a universal God dominates. In the following chapter, I examine the story of Lot and Abraham to see how it reflects the same polarity between incorporation and differentiation evident in Tanakh accounts of the relationship of Moab and Ammon to Israel. Here, too, I establish a reading of the story of Lot in which the conception of a universal God counters the ideology of election in the character of Abraham who dominates the surrounding story.
LOT AND ABRAHAM

This chapter examines how the characterisation and interaction of Lot and Abraham (Genesis 11-19) represents the corporate relationships of Moab and Ammon and Israel, that is to say that the personal names have a patronymic function. Overt patronymic references are common in the Psalms and prophetic texts but not in the ancestral narrative.\(^{84}\) The patronymic aspect of narratives in Genesis was affirmed by Gunkel who understood that the story of the separation of Abraham and Lot in Genesis 13 has an etiological form in which the two men are corporate personalities. In her study of kinship and conflict, Steinmetz (1990: 28) finds that 'stories which take place between individuals and reflect the tensions which appear in different stages of personal development also take place within society and reflect the concerns of different societies'. In this sense the ancestral narrative is a meta-narrative (Steinmetz: 148) in which the quest of the individual for redemption is that of the nation and all humanity.

The rationale for this particular study has three foundations. First it is built upon the report in Genesis 19:37-38 which affirms a genealogical link between Lot and the later nations of Moab and Ammon and thus their kinship relation to Israel.\(^{85}\) Since this link is nowhere elaborated by family narratives regarding Lot's sons or later descendants, the report is dependent on the accounts of Moab and Ammon found later. Second, since the ancestral narrative remained subject to redaction throughout the monarchy of Judah and perhaps even during the exile, one may expect that the relationships of the era of Israel's nationhood had a decisive effect on the final construction of the

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\(^{84}\) E.g. Isaiah 29:22: 'Thus says the Lord who redeemed Abraham', and (Ps 53:6): 'Jacob shall rejoice and Israel shall be glad'.

\(^{85}\) Since this report is affirmed elsewhere only in Deuteronomy 2: 9 and 19, it is clearly more than an antiquarian detail. While the intermediate links are absent, this genealogical report is the equivalent of what Noth (1972: 214-219) calls a primary genealogy, i.e. the names are given without narrative.
ancestral narrative. Indeed, a later perspective appears in the comments that these tribes still exist 'unto this day' (19:37-8). We must allow that the ancestral narrative contains viewpoints that are contemporary or later than those of the accounts examined in the previous chapter. In the Lot traditions of Genesis, we expect to find some reflection about Israel's relations with Moab and Ammon. Third, the intention of the final redactor of Genesis 19 may be seen in the lack of closure to the story of Lot which, together with the birth reports of his sons, directs the readers attention away from Lot towards Moab and Ammon and the tribes they represent.

Any study of Lot and Abraham faces the fact that the figure of Abraham has a far more prominent place than that of Lot in all three mid-eastern religions and that the process of idealisation of the figure of Abraham evident in later scriptures has also affected the stories in Genesis. Regrettably, the idealisation of Abraham within scripture is compounded by the privileged reading given to the Abraham traditions in conventional exegesis of the ancestral narrative. The comment of Mark Brett (1996: 5) that scholarly discourses themselves have histories and socio-economic locations is especially relevant to the traditions about Abraham. This study attempts to look behind the idealisation of Abraham and to avoid the tendency of many commentators to read the stories of Lot only in terms of their relationship to Abraham traditions. To this end, the analysis below identifies within the stories of Abraham and of Lot both their common and their distinct elements. This provides a basis for a fresh assessment of the relative ideological significance of Lot and Abraham for later Israel, in both national and religious terms.

For this study it is helpful to distinguish between texts in which elements of plot, speech and action emerge entirely in a mundane context and those in which these elements flow from a divine initiative. This distinction enables us to discover how the two types of text are used to convey the variety of messages or ideology in the narrative, especially in regard to the divine-human interaction. The idealisation of Abraham is apparent where activities common to Lot and Abraham are presented in mundane terms in the case of Lot but in terms of divine intention in the case of Abraham.  

86 The potential link between the stories of different eras is borne out by Clements (1967) who explores the possibility of royal ideology in the story of Abraham.

87 So Westermann (1985b: 213) considers the reports of succession during the monarchy era as the core of Tanakh, to which the narratives of the Torah (both pre-history and post-history) were added.

88 In my earlier comparative study of the theological significance of Abraham in the scriptures of Judaism, Christianity and Islam (Tonson, 1987), I showed the increasing tendency of the three traditions to idealise for ideological purposes the character of Abraham and, in the case of Judaism, to place him at the centre of tradition. This tendency is also evident in the Qur'an and in the theology of the letters of the Apostle Paul.
Abraham - notably in the frequent promise narratives which attach only to Abraham, never to Lot. At the same time, in the case of Abraham, the ideology imparted by the commentary of the narrator is not always coherent with the viewpoint conveyed through the words and actions of the character, a point which is especially evident in the reference to the faith of Abraham in Gen 15:6. Without the intrusion here of the narrator, the reader would have no idea about the faith of Abraham, since in 15:2 and 15:8 he continues to question God.89

I conclude that the narrator deliberately shows both Abraham and Lot caught up in the ambiguity of human life and that significant differences exist between the traditions about them only in regard to the ideology conveyed through stories of their encounter with the divine. Note that in this chapter, I refer to the narrator without assuming that same narrator lies behind all of Genesis 11-25.

1. Lot and Abraham on the human plane

Below I treat the many parallels between Lot and Abraham on a human plane in terms of a) genealogy and family status; b) itinerary and geography; c) the preservation of the family line and d) moral character and action, following an order determined by the unfolding story. The numerous parallels support the view that the final redaction of the ancestral narrative gives Lot an importance similar to that of Abraham.

Contrasting accounts of family status

A significant element in the narrative presentation of Lot and Abraham is the matter of their status within the wider family. In the Genesis texts we find contrasting viewpoints in the genealogical notes, in references to Lot as both brother and nephew of Abraham, in the accounts of how Lot joined Abraham in leaving Mesopotamia, and in reports of their subsequent separation.

The first reference to Lot in Genesis is in a short genealogy of Terah and his three sons where Lot is included as the son of Haran (Gen 11:27). In this verse also begins the major section of Genesis under the heading: 'Now these are the toledot (generations) of Terah', which section encompasses the entire story of Abraham and Sarah and of Lot and Sodom.90 The genealogy of Gen 11:27 differs from others in that it identifies precisely three generations before turning to further family

89 Wenham (1987: 329) notes this ambiguity but considers it to be resolved by the 'editorial comment'. His reasons are not convincing.

90 This heading is the fifth of ten similar headings in Genesis. Only some of these toledot headings introduce major sections of the narrative. The unexpected absence from the ancestral narrative of a separate section entitled 'the toledot of Abraham' supports the view that the final redaction has an equal concern with both Abraham and Lot.
information, including the wives. While it would have been appropriate for such an introductory verse to have named also Ishmael and Isaac and the sons of Nahor (22:20), Lot is distinguished as the only member of the third generation named.

The *toledot* of Terah follows a lengthy genealogy entitled the *toledot* of Shem which ends with reference to Terah and his three sons, without mention of Lot (Gen 11:26). This suggests that in the new *toledot* the narrator purposely brings the name of Lot alongside those of the previous generation. The status of Lot may also be measured from the notice in 11:28 that his father, Haran had died which appears before any action on the part of Lot is recorded. Presumably, as Steinberg (1993, 47) agrees, Lot had already received his inheritance and become a, if not the, senior member of his family.\(^{91}\) Such a reading is in harmony with the degree of independent status accorded to Lot in the report of his wealth (13:5). In the absence of any reference to the contrary it is reasonable to assume that Lot is to be treated as the senior member of the family of Haran and possibly as an only son. This understanding is supported by the account of the initial migration of the family, led by Terah, who takes just two male members of his family, namely Abraham and Lot. Moreover, later texts in Genesis identify only the family of Nahor remaining in Mesopotamia (Gen 24 and 29).

A similarity of status between Abraham and Lot is reflected in two references to them as brothers. Abraham explains his proposal to part amicably from Lot with an idiomatic statement unique in Tanakh: ‘for men-brothers are we’ (Gen 13.8). Here the similarity of status is an essential element of Abraham’s conception of the relationship.\(^{92}\) Secondly, when Lot is captured from Sodom, the narrator writes: ‘Abram heard his brother was taken captive’ (14:14, 16). Although Lot is dependent on Abraham for rescue, his separate living and possession of goods maintain the picture of similar status between them as kinsmen. In these narratives, as elsewhere in Tanakh, the term ‘brother’ (אָבָא) implies no definite relationship apart from kinship (24:27; 29:12), but Abraham’s language and his deferential treatment of Lot suggest the generation difference between them does not carry much significance.\(^{93}\) Furthermore, there is nothing in Genesis to imply that Lot is junior to Abraham. He may have been older.\(^{94}\)

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91 The reader is certainly not bound to the conventional reading offered by Sarna (1989: 90), that the oldest uncle assumed the guardianship of the child of his dead brother.

92 Reference to brother in the subsequent report that ‘they separated themselves, man from his brother’ (13:11) is probably a common idiom but the mutuality of the separation is consistent with a conception of similar status.

93 Prewitt (1981: 94, n16) develops the notion that the story of Lot presents the lineage of Abraham as wife givers for the lineage of Haran within a pattern of circulating connubium between the families of Terahites. For Prewitt (1990: 20-21) the conception of Lot as brother-kinsman to Abraham raises the possibility that Lot could have gone with Abraham to secure a wife but the lack
The biblical expressions of brotherhood between Lot and Abraham provide a clear alternative, but not an opposition to 'brother's son', found in 12:5 and 14:12 and in the genealogical notes (11:27, 31). Note that no reference to Lot as nephew to Abraham appears in the texts where Lot is an active character (Genesis 13, 19). In opposing arguments about the history of the Lot traditions, Martin Noth and John van Seters both cast doubt on the tradition of Lot as nephew to Abraham, but for our purposes it is important to affirm that the final redaction exhibits two different viewpoints. I therefore reject entirely the harmonising assertion of Coats (1985: 115) that it is not important (for literary purposes) that Lot should be identified as Abraham's nephew. More helpful is the demonstration by Wilson (1977: 49-54) that the nature of relationships between lineages can sometimes undergo deliberate and rapid change. For example, a brotherly relationship may be altered to that of cousins, or names may be promoted from one generation to an earlier one, causing nephews to become brothers. Moreover, different forms of the genealogies may be maintained simultaneously for the domestic and the political realms, i.e. with different functions. So Wilson concludes (199-200) that genealogies are historical only in the sociological sense of representing at

94 Tanakh makes no reference to Lot's age or death but there is a subtle inference in the literary development of the *toledot* of Terah that Lot was older since when Lot is old and presumably about to die (Gen 19:31), Abraham remains hearty, and after Sarah's death he marries again and produces a large new family (Gen 25). That Lot and Abraham were of a similar age is allowed by the possibility that Lot's father Haran, who was the first to die, was senior to Abraham, despite the fact that Abraham's name appears ahead of his brothers' names in the genealogies (Gen 11:26-27). The accounts of Noah and his three sons show that the last mentioned of three sons could be considered the eldest. Although the name of Shem appears first in Gen 5:32; 6:10; and 10:1, the extended genealogies of Genesis 10 reverse the order, suggesting Japheth could be understood as the eldest. This is made explicit in 10:21 although many translations transfer the final term 'elder' from Japheth to Shem. Perhaps the genealogies gave priority to Shem and Abraham not because they were the eldest but because they were in the direct line of the Jewish forefathers. They would then fit the frequent biblical pattern where the youngest received the inheritance. See Prewitt (1981).

95 Noth (1972: 152) draws attention to the fact that 'the uncle-nephew relationship hardly represents an original element in a folk narrative since it is not in itself an essential kinship relation'. Van Seters (1975: 218) argues that 'nowhere prior to P (the Priestly narrative tradition) is Lot regarded as Abraham's nephew'.
a particular time the current relationships.\textsuperscript{96} The different references to Lot as brother and as nephew presumably reflect different conceptions of Israel’s relationships with Moab and Ammon.

The different perspectives given by references to Lot as brother and Lot as nephew are matched by contrasting references to Lot’s association with Abraham in the migration from Haran. The first report states that ‘Lot went with him’ (Gen12:4a; also in 13:1) but in the next verse we read: ‘and Abraham took ... Lot, his brother’s son’. The first report allows that Lot, like Nahor, made his own decision as head of his own family about whether to go or to stay. The view that Abraham took no initiative with regard to Lot accords with the express command to Abraham that he is to leave his kinsmen and the subsequent report that Abraham went forth ‘as YHWH had commanded’. In this view, Lot upon learning of Abraham’s bold plan to migrate, exercised his own will in going with him. The second report suggests that Lot had a status in the family lower than Abraham (as is the case in the parallel report linking Terah and Abraham in 11:31). So Sacks (1990: 78) explains that Abraham is exercising simple family duty, seemingly unaware of his prior duty to leave his kinfolk behind.\textsuperscript{97}

Some significance may attach to the common order of names in both the ‘with’ tradition and the ‘took’ tradition, where the name of Lot appears after those of Abram and Sarah (12:5; 13:1). Nehama Leibowitz (1981: 122) understands this order to signify the fact that Lot had a separate household, as becomes explicit in 13:5ff. In my view, against Leibowitz, separate households must have existed from the start (see 11:31) since there is no intervening event to explain such a development. In the report of 12:5, the plural forms ‘their possessions’, and ‘they had acquired’ would then refer not to Abraham and Sarah but to Abraham and Lot, in keeping with the patriarchal nature of the society described in the narrative.

\textsuperscript{96} This is also the view of Steinberg (1993: 7, 41) who recognises a possible fictional element in the kinship connections and that genealogy matches myth as a mode of communication.

\textsuperscript{97} Conventional commentary on the use of the word ‘took’ is preoccupied with a moral interest: was Abraham wrong to take Lot, given that Lot proves to be a liability later in needing to be rescued (Genesis 14 and 19). Such a reading is developed in his review article by Spina (1992: 374b).
The conception of Lot as one of independent status is largely upheld in the story of the parting of Lot and Abraham which emphasises the mutuality of the decision to part. First, the decision arose from quarrelling among the herdsmen on both sides, neither being especially to blame (13:7-8). Secondly, separation was Abraham's idea (13:8) but Lot was given first choice (13:11). Thirdly, it is presented as a decision between brother-kinsmen (13:8). Fourthly, the report reads in mutual terms: 'they separated themselves (וַיִּפרדוּ) man from his brother' (13:11). This story carries the greatest weight in determining the narrator's conception of Lot in relation to Abraham, since it is the only narrative context in which both characters appear with definite characterisation. The contrasting view which attributes the separation to Lot (13:14) introduces the distinct section of the chapter incorporating the land promise to Abraham and is evidence of the distinct ideology that lies behind the promise narratives.

On the basis of these readings, I conclude that the various notices in Gen 11-14 are quite open to a reading that Lot and Abraham began their migration as kinsmen of similar status with separate households and that Lot travelled at his own initiative because he had an independent status in his family. At the same time, we face the prospect that the ancestral narrative encompasses contrasting traditions about Lot. A number of commentaries may be faulted for a failure to consider this possibility.

**Itinerary and life-style**

The ancestral narrative contains a significant number of close parallels between Lot and Abraham in terms of their itineraries and the life styles of considerable wealth and generous hospitality. As the

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98 Von Rad (1971: 171) explains at length in historico-social terms why the separation of Abraham and Lot is true to life in terms of the limited capacity of pasture and water. His argument carries little weight since we lack any useful measure both of the relative size of the herds and of the capacity of the pastures. Since the famine conditions which directed the patriarchs to Egypt did not lead to their separation (12:10) and abundant pasture was still available for both Lot and Abraham near the Jordan (13:10), we should read the parting in terms of its social significance regarding strife between Israel and her neighbours (13:7). In this regard, the view of Westermann (1985a: 173), that the passage is a quarrel form, is as relevant to later Israel as it is to the ancestral era.

99 In his treatment of the distinct traditions, Westermann (1985a: 210-12) notes that the story of a peaceful resolution of conflict stands over against the political conflict inherent in the promise section (13:16, 17). Coats (1985: 118) affirms that the promises of land and posterity (13:14-17) are not essential to the preceding narrative nor to the link between Abraham and Lot.

100 The recent Genesis commentary by Gordon Wenham (1994) is especially lacking in this regard, as I note throughout this study.
story of Lot opens we find him accompanying other family members on two journeys, firstly with Terah from Ur to Haran (Gen 11:31) and later with Abraham from Haran to an unknown land which YHWH will show them, shortly designated as Canaan (12:5). Lot, like Abraham, also left behind the familiar of country, community and kin (12.4a, 13:1). Their journey brings them to pasture in the high country at Bethel with a diversion down to Egypt because of famine in Canaan (12:10). Although Lot is not linked with Abraham in travels through Canaan (12:6-9) nor in Egypt, he is with Abraham and Sarah on their return from Egypt to Bethel.\(^{101}\) It seems Lot also had sojourned in Egypt.\(^{102}\)

The different outcomes that result from the initially shared journey of Lot and Abraham are hinged in Genesis 13 where their ways divide. The mutual nature of their decision to separate is matched by the subsequent removal of both characters to other pastures, Lot into the Jordan valley (13:12) and Abraham to Hebron (13:18). Later both men are found living in cities, Lot in Sodom where he has a house (19:2), and Abraham in Gerar among the Philistines (20:1). The term 'sojourner' is used of Lot and Abraham for their living both in pasture land (Gen 12:10; 21:23, 34) and in the towns (19:9; 20:1). The text does not allow us to distinguish between Lot and Abraham in respect of the degree of settled living they experienced, whether in town or country.\(^{103}\) These observations show that it is not appropriate to infer dire consequences for Lot's move from living in his tent 'toward Sodom' (Gen 13:12) to living 'in Sodom' (14:12). The same is true regarding the move to Sodom as a journey east (13:11); the east is not outside the domain of human encounter with the divine.\(^{104}\) In

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101 The Genesis Apocryphon presents Lot as a spokesman for Abraham in Egypt (see Fitzmeyer, 1971: 128). A Second Temple tradition asserts that Abraham prayed for Lot's deliverance from Sodom as a reward for Lot's not betraying Abraham and Sarah in Egypt (Gen R. 51: 6).

102 Deurloo (1990: 54) notes the evidence in Gen 13:10 that Lot could compare the Jordan with Egypt but this comparison need only be in the mind of the narrator.

103 In the stories of Lot and of Abraham, and throughout Genesis, the two different Hebrew verbs, to dwell (yašab, 14:12; 20:1) and to sojourn (ger, 19:9; 20:1) cannot be distinguished in terms of the degree of permanence they imply. To the Hittites of Hebron, Abraham described himself, using both Hebrew roots, as 'sojourner' (ger) and 'dweller' (tošab) (13:18; 35:27). Elsewhere we read that Abraham 'sojourned' in Egypt (12:10) and in Gerar (20:1; 21:23, 34) and 'dwelt' in Canaan (13:12; 16:3; 24:3) and at Beersheba (22:19). An examination of the two terms by Joosten (1996: 54-74), in connection with Leviticus 17-26, concludes that the terms are virtually synonymous except that ger has a legal significance and tošab a social significance.

104 Sacks (1990: 43) wrongly considers moving east as a negative motif. He notes that in Gen 3:24 the flaming sword which inhibits return to the garden is on the east. However, the sword cannot represent a condemnation of going east since a return to the garden on that side would mean
fact, there is no condemnation in Tanakh of Lot's move to Sodom because the story of Lot's deliverance from Sodom does not depend on presenting his sojourn there as a mistake.

While Lot is in Sodom, both he and Abraham are caught up in a movement up and down the country when Lot is forcibly removed from Sodom by the northern kings but restored by Abraham (14:16). The parallel movement of the two characters is maintained to the end. Lot is found next in Zoar and finally in the cave in the hills (Gen 19:23, 30). Meanwhile, Abraham moves to Beersheba (22:19) and then journeys to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah (Gen 22). For both Lot and Abraham, the hills provide the setting for a crisis concerning the preservation of their seed.

The first notices of the lifestyle of Lot and Abraham present them as wealthy pastoralists at Bethel (Gen 13:6). Lot had presumably inherited his father's wealth while Abraham received livestock from Pharaoh to add to his possessions (12:5, 16). Their flocks are so large they decide to separate but when Lot moves to live among the cities of the Jordan he still 'pitches his tent' (13:12). Lot has not given up his pastoral life but participates in the symbiotic relationship of town and country, just as Abraham does at Hebron (13:18). Similarly, Abraham's closeness to urban life does not imply removal from pastoral life (21:25-30; 24:35). Nor is the association of Lot with foreigners in Sodom to be condemned. Just as Lot sat at the city gate, dealing with community, commercial and legal matters (19:1) so Abraham was involved in commercial business in Gerar (Gen 20-21) and with the Hittites of Hebron (Gen 23:10). Whatever commercial dealings Lot may have had in Sodom, and none are mentioned in Genesis, they may be seen alongside the accounts of Abraham's partnerships with the three Amorite brothers at Hebron (14:13) and with king Abimelech of Gerar (21:27, 32).

approaching from the east. Sacks tries to support his case with the assertion that Genesis avoids stating that Abraham ever travels east, but the land promise in 13:14 includes land in the east and God bids Abraham explore the length and breadth of all the land he can see (13:17).

105 According to Rogerson (1978: 41) one must allow for variety of nomadic patterns in the biblical world. Archaeological evidence from east of the Jordan (Boling, 1988: 12) and from Ebla (Pettinato, 1991: 82, 125) shows that the semi-nomads lived in a symbiotic relationship to the towns during the winter periods but lived independently, at a distance, at other times.

106 For other examples of commerce at the gate see 2 Kgs. 7:1; Ruth 4:1ff, 11; Job 29:7. The above analysis makes a nonsense of the comment by Westermann (1985a: 309), which is atypically moralistic, where he contrasts Abraham as nomad shepherd on barren steppe with Lot in the city of the fertile land, liable to various dangers.

107 In these accounts, the Hebrew term berit (treaty) first appears with reference to human relationships, and in both cases the issue concerns protection of material wealth (14:24; 21:30). This term, used elsewhere of the covenant, appears in Genesis only five times in regard to human
The way in which Lot and Abraham treat their wealth and position is expressed in the parallel stories of the hospitality they offer to the divine messengers (Genesis 18 and 19). Throughout this work I use the term ‘messenger’ rather than ‘angel’. The latter invokes for most readers unwarranted Greek conceptions of intermediary spiritual beings. Note that throughout Genesis 18-19 the divine messengers are most frequently referred to as men. As in Genesis 16, they engage the human characters on a human plane.

For extra-biblical Jewish traditions that attribute hospitality especially to Abraham see Gen R. 52:1; T. B. Sot. 3:10; Amalak Yitro 1. 195.

For example, Alter (1992: 66) asserts that Abraham provides a pastoral menu but Lot, an urban one, although Genesis 19 provides insufficient evidence for this. Others note the appearance of two different words for bread: *eugah* (18:6) and *massah* (19:3) but Gesenius states in both cases they may indicate unleavened bread that was quickly made. Sacks (1990: 130) has no foundation for stating that Lot's offer is not as humble as Abraham's and that Lot does not run to the visitors because he is afraid to go outside the security of the city walls.

Jewish tradition indirectly acknowledges this parallel in the assertion that Lot learnt hospitality from Abraham (*Pirqa R. El*. 25).

Fretheim (1994: 473b) warns against overdrawing the contrast of hospitality. Loader (1990: 36) recognises that: ‘If anything, Lot even surpasses Abraham because of his insistence.’ Similarly Spina (1992: 374a) suggests Lot’s hospitality may surpass that of Abraham in view of Lot’s efforts to safeguard his guests. Abraham as master of his own abode fulfilled his obligation of hospitality while Lot as a sojourner in Sodom went well beyond the call of duty.
The preservation of seed

As the stories of Lot and Abraham conclude, it becomes apparent that the parallel between them includes the fundamental plot element of the entire toledot of Terah, namely the preservation of their seed. In the case of Abraham this concern is made explicit in the first dialogue between Abraham and YHWH about who Abraham's heir will be (Gen 15:1-6). The possibility of Lot as potential heir has occupied recent studies of the ancestral narrative by Helyer (1983), Turner (1990b) and Steinberg (1993). For example in his comment on Gen 12:5, Turner (86) boldly asserts that apart from Lot's role as potential heir, Abraham had no other reason to take him. Turner does not consider the possibility of Lot's own initiative in migrating. It is difficult to consider Lot as potential heir in Genesis 13 where his wealth suggests he has already received an inheritance from his late father before leaving Haran. If Abraham had considered Lot as heir of his household he would not have suggested parting from him but could have resolved the conflict by adoption. Steinmetz (1991: 81) asserts that by acknowledging Lot as 'brother', Abraham

113 The notion of Lot as heir to Abraham is a feature of later Jewish traditions, as reported by Cohen (1947: 64) and by Leibowitz (1981: 125). Rashi linked the strife between herdsmen to the issue of heirship on the understanding that Lot's men violated the pasture of Abraham but then excused themselves with the explanation that Lot would inherit Abraham's wealth anyway. Ginzberg (1937: 228) reports a distinct tradition that God was displeased with Abraham because of the disharmony and for thinking of Lot as his heir. See also Josephus' Antiquities, Bk I, Ch VII Sect. 1.

114 Clines (1990a: 70-73) also interprets Lot as heir. For Turner (1990a: 65) Abraham's disregard for Sarah in the Egyptian court suggests he no longer expects an heir through her. This conjecture provides no basis for considering Lot as an alternative heir, nor does Abraham's rescue of Lot in Genesis 14. For in Genesis 15, Abraham laments the lack of an heir while Lot is by no means outside Abraham's sphere of influence (Gen 18-19). Turner (1990a: 67) also argues that Abraham offered land to Lot because he saw him as heir, which wrongly assumes Abraham thought of himself as owner of the land he offered. The ancestral narrative emphasises the concern Abraham shows for the possessions of both his and Lot's families, over against the narrower concern for an heir to his own property (Gen 13:8-9; 14:16).

115 Steinberg (1993: 47-49) asserts that the adoption of a nephew could provide for the inheritance of name and property. However, there is nothing in the text to suggest that a formal adoption has taken place. There is no basis for the view of Wenham (1987: 272) that Lot was apparently Abram's heir presumptive 'until the acrimonious separation described in chap. 13.' Wenham conveys a false impression that the acrimony occurred between Lot and Abraham, whereas their relationship remained cooperative as shown in Genesis 14.
precludes his role as heir. Since the narrative is dominated by promises which are addressed to a people who already trace their heritage from Abraham via Jacob, the possibility of Lot as heir does not arise for the implied reader.

The conclusion of the story of Lot shows that far from being an heir to Abraham, Lot himself lacks a male heir with the appropriate heritage (19:31). In this story, the preservation of Lot's seed is repeatedly brought to the fore, in his daughter's speeches, in his sons' names, and in the narrator's commentary (Gen 19:32, 34, 36, 37, 38). As Westermann (1985a: 311f) affirms, the lack of a normal means of reproduction for Lot's daughters (19:31) recalls the point of departure of the entire ancestral story, the barrenness of Sarah (11:30) or, more generally, the woman without a child. We may apply what Westermann (1985a: 250) says of Sarah without qualification to Lot's daughters: 'As she sees it, the only whole to which she can belong is the family. Without this her life has no meaning.' The parallel between the family stories is sustained in the way old age functions as a barrier to reproduction for both Abraham and Sarah (Gen 17:17, 18:11, 21:7) and for Lot (19:31).

The stories of both Lot and Abraham reach completion with the birth of sons who meet the concern to preserve the seed of the father and also his inheritance within his own family. The naming of Moab and Ammon in the closing verses of Genesis 19 constitutes a parallel to Gen 21:1-3 in which Abraham names his son Isaac. The names of Lot's sons affirm that the tribes of Moab and Ammon trace their descent by male line through Lot to Terah, like the tribes of Israel through Abraham. The significant question regarding Lot's relationship to Abraham is not whether he will be heir but

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116 Steinmetz presents an interesting interpretation of Israelite history in terms of the oedipal complex and the need to reconcile conflict between father and son. This can hardly apply to Lot and Abraham and she does not account for positive elements in their relationship and in the corresponding links between Israel and Moab and Ammon.

117 Fretheim (1994: 433b) affirms that the story does not imply Lot as heir. Perhaps commentators are attracted to the notion of Lot as a potential heir to Abraham because his subsequent removal fits into the pattern of successive obstacles in the ancestral narrative to the fulfillment of the divine promises to Abraham. However, we might expect from other examples of such obstacles that the narrator would make such an intention quite definite, as in the case of Sarah's barrenness and Abraham's dealings with Pharaoh and Abimelech.

118 That these references are purposely created for literary effect is clear, since other texts give a different picture of the beauty and fecundity of Sarah (12:15; 20:2) and of the virility of Abraham after Sarah has died (25:1-5), not to mention the capacity of Lot to copulate while in an inebriated state.
whether, for the purposes of the promise ideology, Lot is within the family or outside of it. This analysis of the family aspects shows that in approaching this question we should not limit our approach to the narrative by an assumption that Lot is in some way inferior to or dependent upon Abraham.

Moral character and action

A moralistic treatment of Lot and Abraham is a common feature of many commentaries. On one side we have the denigration of Lot and on the other the idealisation of Abraham. It is therefore fruitful to re-examine the strength of character and moral qualities of Lot and Abraham and the women of their families as depicted in the ancestral narrative. This analysis will rebut the typical criticisms that Lot was passive, selfish or fearful or of a lesser moral stature than Abraham.

A passive view of Lot is first conveyed in regard to the migration report that Abraham 'took' Lot, yet it is matched by the tradition that Lot went with Abraham which suggests initiative and boldness on Lot's part (Gen 12:4-5). The same is true of Lot's deliberate choice of the good pasture by the Jordan (Gen 13:10-11). It is only in Genesis 14 that Lot has a totally passive role, first as a captive of the northern kings and again when he is rescued by Abraham. However, Lot is only one of many prisoners and the entire story is centred upon Abraham and the theme of wealth and due rewards.\(^{119}\)

The narrator's conception of Lot is best understood from the story of Genesis 19 where Lot receives fullest characterisation. The passive aspect of Lot's character is evident in the two stories of his rescue (he lingered in Sodom) and in the incest scene, but equal emphasis is given to his initiatives in offering hospitality, in rebuking the men of Sodom (contrast Abraham in Egypt) and in seeking approval to relocate to Zoar. I see no reason to believe that the narrator is highlighting the passive elements.

A selfish conception of the character of Lot is found in the Talmud comments regarding Lot's choice of the good pasture by the Jordan (Gen 13:10-11). On the basis of the words: 'Lot lifted up his eyes', the Talmud describes Lot as lustful, since this phrase also describes the lust of Potiphar's wife for Joseph.\(^{120}\) In fact, this is a very common phrase in Tanakh, with no necessary connection to the motive of lust. Much is made of Abraham's offer of a choice of land to Lot although this may be only a form of polite speech.\(^{121}\) Conventional commentaries go on to contrast the attitude of Lot

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\(^{119}\) Despite the passive role of Lot, one Jewish tradition asserts that the kings of the north attacked Sodom on account of Lot. See Ginzb erg (1937: 229).

\(^{120}\) Gen 39:7; TB Nazir 23a; Gen R. 41:7.

\(^{121}\) Skinner (1910: 253) does not hesitate to spiritualise the offer: 'The narrator has finely conceived the magnanimity which springs from fellowship with God', although Vogels (1979: 12) argues that
and Abraham towards wealth by placing Abraham's rejection of the booty of Sodom (14:22-24) alongside Lot's decision to live in the supposedly wealthy city.122 This comparison is completely fallacious, for Abraham had gladly accepted the wealth of Pharaoh (Gen 12:16) and Lot was already a wealthy man before moving towards Sodom. Moreover, the treaty relationship between Abraham and the Amorites (14:13) lends legitimacy to Lot's commerce in the Canaanite city of Sodom. In this respect most commentaries fail to distinguish Lot's move to the Jordan valley from his move to live in Sodom.123 Lot was first attracted by the fertility of the region, that is, by the qualities of the land, not of the cities (13:10). Tanakh contains no condemnation of Lot or Abraham nor distinction between them regarding the commercial aspects of their life style.

Conventional commentaries express disapproval of Lot largely because of his removal to Sodom and actions there, but they ignore significant parallels between the stories of Lot in Sodom and Abraham in Egypt. Both families move from the familiar of the country into the unknown of the city because of a crisis concerning pasture or sustenance (Gen 12:10; 13:10). In both cases a new crisis arises from the motive of sexual desire, and in different ways a violation of hospitality eventuates, one by Pharaoh, the other by the men of Sodom. Both stories present a dubious strategy devised by the male, dependent upon the male control over the sexual capacity of women. Abraham arranges for Sarah to identify herself in Egypt as his sister because he feared for his own life (Gen 12:12-13).124

the division of the land is contrary to the divine intention revealed in Gen 13:14-15. See also Remmer (1984: 118).

122 The gratuitous comment of Leibowitz (1981: 175) is not exceptional: 'Lot is an example of the average man, a study in mediocrity faithfully following in the steps of his master Abraham until his pocket is affected.' So Alexander (1982: 26) writes: 'One seeks earthly wealth and success but discovers that it leads only to failure and ruin. The other rejecting earthly wealth and security, but trusting in God, finds these very things to be his own.'

123 E.g. Leibowitz (1972: 176) describes Lot's journey east as 'this flight from Abraham to Sodom'. The confusion of Jordan and Sodom is evident in the writing of O'Brien (1990: 14-5) who quite wrongly transfers the 'evil' epithet of Gen 13:13 from the people of Sodom to the land of Jordan, which was a prized part of Israelite territory throughout the kingdom era. O'Brien wrongly imposes a moralistic connection between Lot's choice and the destruction of Sodom by describing it as 'the destruction of the land Lot chose'.

124 This fact is rarely acknowledged but an exception is found in Turner (1990b: 87). The same motive of fear appears in the parallel account of Abraham and Sarah in Gerar (20:11-13). Wenham (1994: 58) reveals his privileged treatment of Abraham where he excuses Abraham's treatment of Sarah in Egypt as a strategy to ward off suitors rather than to save his own life. Contrast the
This strategy is akin to Lot's offer of his daughters to the mob but while Lot's offer is to protect his guests, Abraham sacrifices his wife's honour for his own safety. Furthermore, Abraham is nowhere found to be under the violent, personal attack that Lot faced. These comparisons are not particularly favourable to Abraham. The motive of fear is also attached to Lot regarding his request to escape to Zoar in order to save his life (Gen 19:20). Fear is a recurring factor in the stories of biblical characters and does not call for condemnation.\(^{125}\) It is certainly not an established characteristic of Lot for although he is afraid to stay in Zoar (19:30) Lot appears quite fearless in the face of the intimidation of the mob at his door (19:6).

In the stories of both Lot and Abraham, the most significant moral questions arise regarding relationships between family members. Lot's cruel offer of his daughters (19:8) stands alongside Sarah's harsh treatment of Hagar (16:6; 21:9-14) and Abraham's lack of objection to sacrifice Isaac. While the initiative lies first with Sarah, Abraham is quite deliberate in using Hagar to father Ishmael and giving assent to her expulsion. So Trible (1984:11) writes: 'No mighty patriarch is Abram - but rather the silent, acquiescent, and minor figure in a drama between two women'. It is significant that Lot's daughters and Sarah exhibit fullest characterisation and speech only in stories regarding family preservation. Here we may compare the motive behind the incest initiated by Lot's daughters (19:32-35), to preserve the seed of their father, with the express concern of Sarah for her own future, that she 'might be built up' through Hagar (Gen 16:2).\(^ {126}\) There is no sense in which Sarah's motive is more justified than the daughters', for in both stories the violation of individuals is explained by the greater needs of the family unit.\(^ {127}\) Once again Tanakh offers no moral evaluations, apart from the critique implied by the ensuing breakdown of relationship between Hagar and Sarah.

\(^{125}\) Note the fear motive in the case of Adam (3:10), Sarah (18:15), Abraham (26:7), Jacob (28:17, 31:31, 32:7), Joseph's brothers (42:35, 43:18), Moses (Exod.2:14, 3:6) and often regarding the Israelites who are afraid of the Egyptians, of Moses, of the Philistines.

\(^{126}\) Trible (1984: 10) provides a compelling treatment of this story.

\(^{127}\) The incest may be understood in part as a substitute, in the absence of other partners, for an endogamous marriage which functioned, according to Steinberg (1993: 12) to control inheritance. However, her view (1993: 73) that the union of 'the wrong sexual partners produces a non-Israelite genealogy' is difficult to square with the acceptance of the offspring of Judah who married a Canaanite (38:2) and Moses who married a Midianite (Exod 3:1). Such anthropological treatments of kinship cannot assume that an ideal of endogamy was universally acknowledged or widely practised in Israel at any time.
Summary

This analysis of human encounters has shown a) that the stories of Lot and Abraham have many parallels in terms of plot, b) that they convey a realistic picture of the characters in both families and c) that the narrative avoids moral judgements throughout.128 As to the plot elements, Lot and Abraham travel and prosper materially together. They mutually decide to move to new pasture which leads to their separation but does not break their sense of family connection. After parting they are both found as sojourners in cities, with a personal status sufficient for doing business at the city gate. In different ways, both Lot and Abraham are caught up in a desperate concern to preserve their seed. As to character, the narrator shows both Abraham and Lot at their best and at their worst and thus acknowledges the moral ambiguity of their lives. On occasions both show hospitality, enterprise and courageous vulnerability but at other times they display fear and self-interest. By exercising male power, they place female family members in danger.

In short, the narrative makes no vital distinction between Lot and Abraham on the human plane. One wonders how Wenham (1994: 56) could overlook this balance where he quotes Proksch (1924): 'I depicts Lot's character as a contrast to Abraham's in masterly fashion: he is fond of good living (13:10ff), soft (19:7f, 30ff), indecisive and anxious'. T. D. Alexander (1982: 25) offers a similar example: 'We may observe how Lot's desire for an easy life leads only to disaster, whereas Abraham prospers to the extent that he exercises considerable influence in the national affairs of the region'. Presumably commentators impute a negative characterisation to Lot in order to rationalise the demise of Lot in Sodom in terms of his own choices and to justify Abraham. It is my contention that the extensive parallels between Lot and Abraham on the human plane show that moral considerations cannot serve to explain a religious ideology which places one of them at the centre of covenant and one outside it. Nor can they explain why Abraham becomes the object of YHWH's promise and Lot becomes the object of divine mercy. These matters are the subject of the remainder of this chapter.

2. Lot And Abraham Encounter The Divine

Within the narratives which incorporate a divine element, I distinguish accounts of divine initiative in the lives of Lot and Abraham from those of their response to the divine. The relatively greater attention given to Abraham in stories on the human plane is even more pronounced in stories of divine encounter which, in the case of Lot, are limited to Genesis 19. However, that chapter is remarkable for the significant theology of mercy it introduces into Tanakh. In elaborating upon the

128 The one story of Lot without parallel in the account of Abraham is his demise in the cave in the hills with no mention of death or age or transition to the next generation. I return to this matter in the next chapter.
divine in the lives of Lot and Abraham, it is fruitful to consider not only the explicit affirmations made by the narrator and in the speeches of the characters, which major upon Abraham, but also the implicit messages of the narrative, which are most significant regarding Lot.

_Divine initiative towards Lot and Abraham_

The account of divine initiative in the story of Genesis 19 may be compared with nineteen other accounts in Genesis 12-24. I include among these accounts, eight cases of divine intervention in response to human action. The story of Lot belongs with the remaining eleven accounts that describe divine initiatives relating to Abraham (including Sarah in two cases), none of which is predicated on human action. An analysis of these accounts shows that Lot, like Abraham and Sarah, encounters the divine in human form, enters into dialogue, receives words of revelation and challenge, and experiences divine action both in deliverance and in blessing.

Abraham is one of the few characters in Tanakh whose activity begins with and is built around words of divine revelation (12:1-3). For the most part, these revelations are limited to verbal exchange; they lack a specific physical context and stand apart from the action in the narrative. The narrator simply asserts that Abraham heard the divine voice or had a vision of the divine as a means of presenting the ideology of promise. By comparison, Lot first appears with characterisation in the earthly circumstances of pastoral life (Genesis 13) and never receives a revelation by way of the

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129 For this purpose I have treated as one initiative the encounter of Genesis 18 involving both the manifestation of the messengers to Abraham and Sarah, and their announcement of a son. Genesis 19 must be treated similarly, respecting the manifestation and the warning to Lot (19:1-3, 12-14), but the two incidents of deliverance embedded in the chapter are identified as separate initiatives by the messengers.

130 These are the judgements on Pharaoh, Sodom and Abimelech (12:17; 19:24-5; 20:3) and the deliverance of Hagar (16:7; 21:17) and of Lot (19:10; 19:16), as well as YHWH’s response to Abraham’s representations about Sodom (18:26).

131 The greater volume of material relating to Abraham is partly due to the repetition in seven divine announcements of unconditioned promises of material blessing, posterity, and land, in various combinations. Significant distinct material occurs only in three promise speeches which call for a human response, and in the one report of fulfillment of the promise of a son (21:1-2).

132 In the reports of these various encounters, the divine communication is described, using a variety of Hebrew terms, either as a spoken message or as an appearance, but the use of the different terms does not especially correlate with the persons addressed, nor with the nature of the content of the communication.
voice or a vision of YHWH. These observations show the significance of the parallel accounts of Genesis 18 and 19 where Abraham and Lot respectively encounter the divine through giving hospitality to the messengers. In both chapters the guests' acceptance of human hospitality and food portrays a degree of intimacy between Lot and Abraham and the divine and provides a context for revelation they bring (18:5, 8; 19:3).\(^{133}\) With respect to Abraham, Genesis 18 is the only account in which the revelation goes beyond the verbal into an active encounter integral to its physical setting.

The parallel between the opening scenes of Genesis 18 and 19 highlights the contrast between the two words of revelation given to Abraham and Sarah, and to Lot. One is a joyous message of a promised son while the other announces the doom of Sodom. However, both announcements may be understood as a deliberate exercise of divine purpose according to the soliloquy, which declares that YHWH will not hide his plans from Abraham (Gen 18:17-19). Since the text neither makes clear what these plans are, nor provides any account of such a revelation to Abraham, one can only conclude from the following verse that the subject of the revelation is judgement upon Sodom (19:20). Within the narrative of Genesis 18-19 the only word of revelation about the judgement is directed to Lot.\(^ {134}\) These observations draw attention to the prophetic role which is associated with divine revelation. Both the soliloquy and YHWH's message to Abimelech characterise Abraham as a prophet (Gen 20:7) but Abraham in Gerar functions rather in the priestly role of prayer and nowhere in the lengthy story of Abraham does he exercise any prophetic role.\(^ {135}\) The opposite is true of Lot, who in Tanakh is never identified as a prophet but takes on a classic prophetic stance in warning the hostile mob outside his door.\(^ {136}\) This has no parallel in the case of Abraham regarding his dealings

\(^{133}\) Nowhere else in Tanakh is there a report that divine representatives ate food. Indeed, the messenger's refusal of food in the similar story of Judges 13:15-6 highlights the distinctiveness of the Genesis accounts.

\(^{134}\) These observations show the plain error of the comment by Wenham (1987: 261): 'That the Lord is ready to discuss this judgment with Abraham shows the latter's standing, ...'

\(^{135}\) The biblical notion of prophet, nabi: is centrally expressed in the era of the monarchy through characters like Samuel, Elijah, Huldah and those whose names attach to prophetical books. Aaron, Miriam and Deborah were given the same status (Exod 7:1; 15:20; Judg 4:4). Such a designation of Abraham appears anachronistic. In regard to Gen 18:17, Wenham (1994: 50) illustrates the typical privileging of Abraham in the commentaries: 'It is characteristic of the true prophet that he is privy to the divine secrets.' He does not think to apply this to Lot.

\(^{136}\) This is the basis for the inclusion of Lot among the prophets in several references in the Qur'an. In an intertextual study, Zakovitch (1993: 148-9) contrasts Lot's concern for his sons-in-law with the indifference of Jonah towards Nineveh.
in Egypt, Hebron or Gerar. In this respect the designation of Abraham as prophet is a further example of an explicit reference to Abraham in the text which implicitly is more appropriate to Lot.

In the case of both Abraham and Lot, the first words of divine revelation they receive challenge them to move on. The affirmation of divine initiative behind Abraham’s departure from Haran (Gen 12:1-3) is emphasised in the subsequent report that he set out ‘as YHWH had told him to do’ (12:4) and twice more in the form of testimony by Abraham himself (20:13 & 24:7-8). Similarly the first explicit challenge of divine origin that Lot receives is also to forsake his home, in Sodom (19:12). According to Jewish tradition Haran was like Sodom, a somewhat hostile climate, and Abraham, like Lot, may have departed unwillingly for fear of his life. Here is a parallel between Abraham and Lot which seems to be completely unremarked in the wealth of Genesis commentary. This parallel rather qualifies the apparent distinction between Lot and Abraham regarding their migration from Haran which for Lot, who simply ‘went with’ Abraham, is seemingly unrelated to divine intention. Such references to Lot, who at this stage is somewhat incidental to the story of Abraham, may serve only to ensure his presence for the later stories. It is significant that at the appropriate point the narrator shows Lot equally subject to the divine challenge to leave home.

While Lot does not receive the explicit motive given to Abraham, including the promise of offspring, it happens that sons are born to him, as to Abraham, only after he has left home. My close reading of Genesis 19 elaborates upon the theme of testing in Lot’s encounter with the divine. This matches to some degree Jewish traditions concerning the ten trials of Abraham (Jubilees 17:17; 19:8).

Turning now from divine speech to action, we find both Abraham and Lot and their families delivered from danger in the city by divine intervention. The two stories of Abraham and Sarah in Egypt and in Gerar are matched by the two stories of Lot’s deliverance from danger in Sodom. Moreover, the plague upon the house of Pharaoh (Gen 12:17), the barrenness of the women of Gerar (20:17-8) and the blindness of the men of Sodom (19:11) are similarly temporary punishments. In the case of Lot a special divine-human intimacy is portrayed by the language of the hands. Lot is first plucked from danger at the door of his house by the hand of the messengers and later led by the hand out of Sodom (19:10, 16). The intimacy of the physical language in these two reports is

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138 The Qur’ān particularly links Lot and Abraham in the report that God rescued Abraham with Lot and brought them from Mesopotamia to the Promised Land (Surah 21:71). This report grows out of Jewish legends about Abraham’s discovery of the true God and how this led him into conflict with his father and other kinfolk (Josephus’ Antiquities, Bk I, Ch VII Sect. 1; Jubilees 17:17).
matched by the two references that Lot was delivered through divine mercy (19:16, 19). The relationship of Abraham to YHWH is also expressed in intimate terms, in the soliloquy: 'I have known him', which is a unique expression in Tanakh of a relationship between YHWH and one of his people (18:19). The same intimacy is evident in the robust dialogues that follow (18:23-32; 19:18-20). In these ways the relationship of Lot to the divine attains a significance no less than that of Abraham.

The action of the divine is also conveyed implicitly within the narrative, for behind the biblical accounts of human prosperity lies the notion that all good in life derives from divine providence. Therefore the lack of promise narratives concerning Lot does not imply that the narrator of the ancestral narrative had no conception of divine blessing upon him.\textsuperscript{139} The notion of blessing, first declared to Abraham in Gen 12:2, is basically of a material nature, as is apparent in the servant's account of Abraham's life (Gen 24:1, 35).\textsuperscript{140} Accordingly, Wenham (1987: 275, 296) identifies five elements of blessing: long life, wealth, peace, good harvest and children, on which basis there is little distinction within the narrative between Lot and Abraham. Both men reach old age retaining their virility (Gen 19:31; 25:1-8), both are prosperous pastoralists (Gen 13:2,5; 19:1; 20:15-16; 21:22), the stories of conflict in both cases represent temporary strife (Genesis 13 & 14), harvest is not an issue for pastoralists and both finally produce sons. Lot shares with Sarah and Abraham the experience of fathering sons against all natural expectations although he has received no promise of a son, his wife is dead, and he remains unaware of his reproductive role (Gen 19:33, 35).\textsuperscript{141}

Divine action is also seen in fulfillment of promises of a great nation and of land (12:2, 7; 13:15). For Abraham the prospect of a great nation is fulfilled not only in Israel but through the Edomites, Ishmaelites, Midianites and other tribes (Gen 25:1-4). Similarly, Lot also gave rise to the nation

\textsuperscript{139} Similarly, the explicit statement of blessing upon Ishmael (Gen 17:20) is represented implicitly by the divine care for Hagar (Genesis 16 & 21). This example shows that in the ancestral narrative, the conception of divine blessing is not limited to those within the covenant of Abraham.

\textsuperscript{140} The dominance in the ancestral narrative of the material element of blessing is acknowledged in the detailed study by Mitchell (1987: 67). However, he shows that the important elements of fertility, prosperity and dominion are secondary to the notion of blessing as a relationship to God, which for Lot is expressed in the arrival of the messengers at his home and in his deliverance from destruction.

\textsuperscript{141} In his treatment of the blessing theme, Wenham (1987) appears to draw on material outside of the ancestral narrative when he finally asserts that the highest blessing was God walking among his people. In this regard, we also have parallel accounts of the divine manifest through the messengers in the daily lives of Abraham and Lot (Gen 18 & 19).
states of Moab and Ammon that were comparable in strength to Judah, Israel and Edom. The promise to Abraham of the land of Canaan is later matched by a recognition of divine grant of land to Moab and Ammon (Deut 2:9 & 19). The perspective of Deuteronomy 2 is consistent with that of Gen 13:14-15 where the land promise is not limited to Canaan but incorporated all that Abraham could see from Bethel in the high country, including the Jordan that had attracted Lot from the same vantage point (13:10-11). The distinct tradition of Gen 10:19 has the same viewpoint, that Sodom and Gomorrah were within the borders of the Canaanites. Living in the Jordan, Lot is not separated from YHWH but remains within the orbit and the effect of the land promise to Abraham, even though he is not mentioned in that promise.\textsuperscript{143}

This account of divine favour towards Lot and Abraham must finally consider to what extent it was conditioned by human response. In the case of Lot's experience of blessing and the gift of lands to Moab and Ammon, conditions are entirely lacking. Similarly, in the case of Abraham, while blessings are the subject of divine promise, they are often without condition (Gen 12:7; 13:15-16; 15:5, 18; 18:10, 14, 18-19; 21:12-13).\textsuperscript{144} However, there are two promise narratives which call for some action on the part of Abraham, namely the challenge to leave Haran (12:1-3) and the practice of circumcision (17:1-14). The first of these may be considered conditional only in the sense that the promises are to be fulfilled elsewhere. In accompanying Abraham, Lot fulfills the same condition. Only in the case of circumcision do we find a definite condition to be fulfilled, in connection with promises of posterity and land. However, circumcision as a sign of a loyal commitment appears as a condition for the maintenance rather than the establishment of the covenant. The declarations of divine favour (Gen 17: 1-8) appear without condition.\textsuperscript{145} In summary, the unconditional nature of

\textsuperscript{142} Cassuto (1964: 368) also sets forward this reading.

\textsuperscript{143} My reading is at odds with Jewish traditions that Lot placed himself outside of the care of YHWH (Gen R 41:5-7; Ginzberg, 1937: 228), and with that of Wenham (1987: 299), who sees Lot in Sodom under the curse of Gen 12:1-3. Nowhere does the ancestral narrative limit the presence of YHWH to the land of promise.

\textsuperscript{144} Driver (1913: 153) sees the promise of all the land to Abraham (13:14f) as a reward for his unselfishness towards Lot, but this makes the land promise contingent rather than unconditional as in 12:7.

\textsuperscript{145} Throughout Genesis 17, references to circumcision are all in the passive voice: ‘be circumcised’. Imperative verb forms appear only in verse one: ‘walk before me and be blameless’. Hamilton (1990: 461) notes that the term ‘blameless’ elsewhere in Tanakh has ritual significance. On this account it may be linked to the notion of circumcision later in Genesis 17. Westermann (1985a: 259) raises an alternative reading, that blamelessness is a consequence of Abraham’s relationship with YHWH rather than a condition.
divine favour towards Abraham dominates the promise texts and one may not distinguish the
treatment of Lot and Abraham in this regard.\textsuperscript{146} The unconditional element of divine action in the ancestral narrative is borne out in the contrast
between the summary treatment of Lot's wife, who looked back towards Sodom (Gen 19:17, 26) and
YHWH's accommodating response to Lot (19:21) and to Abraham and Sarah in several situations. It
is difficult to understand why Lot's wife is turned into salt just after she has been delivered from
destruction, especially as Abraham who also looked down on the destruction did not suffer her fate
(19:27-28). The juxtaposition of the two reports shows the inadequacy of conventional
commentary.\textsuperscript{147} This story of Lot's wife points to the way that the narrative treats quite differently
the named and the anonymous characters.\textsuperscript{148} Stories of judgement of the anonymous characters
provide a general expression of divine power but can be better understood in terms of plot
development than in moral terms. In terms of the plot, Lot's wife cannot be part of the incest scene
that follows.

\textit{The response of Lot and Abraham towards the divine}

The ancestral narrative contains various accounts of the ways Lot and Abraham recognise the divine
presence and favour and respond to the divine purpose. Once again the relative quantity of material
about Abraham may distract the reader from a number of similarities in stories about Lot. In the
responses of both characters we confront the same ambiguity that features on the human plane.

\textsuperscript{146} Turner (1990a: 58) and others argue that fulfillment of the promises to Abraham is contingent
upon his obedience to the divine imperatives they contain. However, in Genesis 17 and elsewhere in
the ancestral narrative, it seems more accurate to observe that it is not the possibility of fulfillment
but the manner of fulfillment that is contingent on the action of the characters. As Grünwaldt
(1992: 42-44) illustrates, the question of conditionality is understood differently by different
redactors of the narrative. In his view, the conditional element in Genesis 17, already distinguished
from surrounding chapters as a Priestly text, appears only in a secondary, post-exilic redaction of the
chapter.

\textsuperscript{147} For example, Renner (1984: 152) comments: 'The judgements of God are not to be looked at.'

\textsuperscript{148} The named characters, which generally have some developed characterisation, enjoy a dynamic
relation with the divine and experience judgement and mercy. The unnamed, whether individuals
or the populace of the time of Noah or of Sodom, like Lot's wife, are treated summarily. This
distinction does not allow the reader to draw easy moralistic conclusions about the anonymous
characters nor about the divine nature.
Recognition of the divine presence becomes an issue in the accounts of Genesis 18 and 19 which move beyond the purely verbal communication reported in earlier chapters to describe the encounters of Abraham and Lot with divine messengers. Comment is required on this topic since some commentaries have drawn a contrast between Lot and Abraham based on the different vowel pointings of the Hebrew word אדני (lord) which appear in 18:3 and 19:2, 18. In the MT a short 'a' appears in 19:2, which is a plural form of polite address as an alternative to the normal Hebrew plural 'im', while a long final 'a' appears in 18:3 and 19:18, normally signifying YHWH (as in 18:27, 31). However, as the pointing is not original to the text, we are not limited to this interpretation. The pointing, 'my Lord' and singular forms that follow (18:3-4) may represent a harmonisation with the report in 18:1a that YHWH appeared

In accordance with the strong parallelism between the narratives, both respecting the hospitality described and the curious mix of singular and plural references to the messengers, the same pointing should prevail in both 18:3 and 19:2. Recognition of the divine first appears respectively in Sarah's change of attitude (18:15) and in Lot's speech to his sons-in-law (19:14), in each case following a word of revelation (18:14a; 19:12-13). Lot also has had two life saving experiences at the hands of the messengers. Both stories convey a realistic portrayal of the characters' slowly dawning awareness of divine intervention in their lives which parallels stories elsewhere. This

149 However, in the story of Gideon, the MT uses the form of address with the long 'a' even where Gideon is still unaware of the divine (Judg 6:15).

150 While the reading 'my Lord' (Gen 18:3) is consistent with the later religious ideal of the figure of Abraham, his offer of hospitality holds greater merit if it is made as to ordinary travellers, as also in the case of Lot.

151 The ambiguity between singular and plural forms of אדני is carried through in the discrepancy of pronoun suffixes between 18:3 and 18:4-5 and within 19:17 and 19:18. These observations suggest a deliberate redaction to express the mystery of the three (or two) messengers as a manifestation of one God. The evidence of 18:9-10 and of Genesis 19 counts against the explanation from Westermann (1985a: 278) that Gen 18 intertwines a story of hospitality, featuring the plural, with one of promise, featuring the singular.

152 These observations are apparently not recognised by Speiser (1964: 129) and JB who, in 18:3 and 19:18, choose a third alternative pointing with an 'i' vowel, meaning 'my lord'.

153 See the stories of Gideon (Judg. 6:11-24) and of the parents of Samson (13:2-23).
awareness is subsequently confirmed by words of testimony from the characters themselves. In his speech to the messengers Lot is the first character in the Bible to acknowledge the mercy of YHWH (19:19). Abraham affirms to his servant that YHWH had led him from Haran (24:7) and his servant later states that YHWH had blessed Abraham in every way (24:35). These affirmations contrast with Sarah's earlier complaint that YHWH was responsible for her barrenness.

In the ancestral narrative, human action as a response to divine purpose is seen from the beginning in the account of Abraham's journey to Canaan, during which he built altars and invoked the god YHWH (Gen 12:6-8). By implication, Abraham gave up the worship of the gods of Mesopotamia, although this is stated only elsewhere (Josh 24:2).\textsuperscript{154} A reader with the religious conceptions of the ancient world could assume that Lot also left the gods associated with the territory of Haran. However, Tanakh nowhere gives account of Lot in regard to religious action. Lot's response to the divine purpose is recounted only in Genesis 19. When he is challenged to leave Sodom we read that Lot lingered, an evocative comment readily adapted to the moralist viewpoint of conventional commentary. The same is true of Lot's objection against escape to the hills (19:18).

In some cases, Abraham's response to the divine challenge appears quite opposite to Lot's, particularly where he sets off to Canaan (12:4) and later to Mt Moriah (22:3) without a word. Abraham heads for the hills, willing to sacrifice Isaac's life, while Lot avoids the hills to save his own life. The contrast is somewhat mitigated by the obedience of Lot who leaves Sodom without looking back, thus ensuring his deliverance (Gen 19:17).\textsuperscript{155} We may also attribute the absence of any riposte in Genesis 12 to literary considerations.\textsuperscript{156} However, it is pious to assume in either case that when he is challenged to make these sacrificial journeys, Abraham has nothing to say, since he is elsewhere quite argumentative toward YHWH regarding his posterity where he personally faces no great demand (15:2, 8; 17:17-18). In determining the characterisation of Abraham, his apparent lack of appeal on behalf of his innocent son must be weighed alongside his repeated intervention

\textsuperscript{154} The narrator's conception that the new religion began in a new land illustrates the view of Max Weber (1922: 10), that a breakthrough in religious development was more likely among those living a more transient life.

\textsuperscript{155} There are two instances of a divine 'not' to Abraham but they have the character of release and deliverance rather than of prohibition (Gen 21:12; 22:12).

\textsuperscript{156} Gen12:1-4 is only an introduction to the story of Abraham, as is apparent in the lack of significant characterisation or the employment of speech that is integral to Scene Three of Genesis 19 and to the lively dialogues Abraham shares with YHWH (Genesis 15 & 18).
before YHWH on behalf of the righteous of Sodom. There are linguistic links between the appeals of both Abraham (18:23-25) and Lot (19:18-20) and both are at once bold and apologetic. 157

Abraham's immediate responses in the above examples contrast with his hesitation elsewhere. His first response to the vision of YHWH and the covenant promise of Genesis 17 is not faith but laughter and disbelief. Here, contrary to biased commentary like that of Delitzsch, Abraham is on a par with Sarah (Gen 18:12-15). 158 His request to make Ishmael his heir totally disregards the prophecy about Sarah (17:16-18). According to this story, the ideal in Abraham appears not in his faith but in his observance of the ritual of circumcision. Neither Abraham nor Sarah (18:12) consistently accept or act upon the words of revelation they receive. The ambivalence in their responses matches that of Lot. Although his speech to his sons-in-law emphasises that he has taken seriously the word he has received, his lingering in Sodom and preference for Zoar paint a different picture (Gen 19:14 & 16). However, while Abraham and Lot both exhibit human argumentativeness towards the divine, this element is not considered repugnant to the ideal of faith or an obstacle to divine favour. This is most apparent in the dialogue between Lot and the messengers (19:18-22) as also in the story of Jacob wrestling the 'man' (Gen 32:24).

Summary

This analysis shows that there is considerable material in the ancestral narrative that equates the experience of Lot and Abraham within divine providence. Both families are recipients, in different ways, of divine revelation, deliverance and blessing, and both exhibit a lack of faith in YHWH. Differences appear in the significance attached to events recounted and in the way their experience is characterised. Through the promise narratives and internal commentary, the narrator declares that Abraham and Sarah are especially chosen as recipients of divine promises and as mediators of blessing. Lot and his family experience all the same exigencies as the chosen and live always in the same arena but are not of the chosen. Unlike Abraham, Lot is not recognised as a channel of blessing to others or as a determinant of divine blessing or curse. While Abraham is characterised as an object of divine promise (12:2-3), Lot is presented as an object of divine mercy (19:17, 19).

Since the different religious significance attached to Abraham and Lot, both within the narrative and in subsequent religious traditions, cannot be attributed to any distinctions between them on a

157 Note the common phrase: 'if I have found favour in your eyes' (Gen 18:3, 19:19) and the repeated use of 'behold now ...' (18:27, 31; 19:19, 20), which reflect a deferential attitude.

158 Delitzsch (1889: 43) wrote: 'Sarah's laughter is that of contemptuous doubt but that of Abraham, of delighted astonishment. He needed to have his faith encouraged, she, to be brought back to humility'. The account of the naming of Isaac by Sarah supports the view that the laughter motif was linked primarily to her, not to Abraham (Gen 21:1-7).
human, ethical plane, it clearly represents a reading and an elaboration of the traditions from a particular ideological perspective. In the case of Abraham, I shall highlight this process of ideological reading by naming it 'Abrahamicism'. The many examples I have given of the biased commentary of the last one hundred years from scholars with the advantage of a modern critical perspective illustrates the influence that Abrahamism has had upon the biblical traditions since the earliest period of Israelite historiography. A fresh reading of the stories of Lot, which I establish in the following chapters, provides an opportunity to critique Abrahamism from the outside, which I take up in the final chapter.

3. Lot and Abraham representing Moab and Ammon and Israel

I now summarise key themes from the story of Lot and Abraham which reflect major aspects of the Tanakh accounts of the relations between Moab and Ammon, and Israel. Those of a mundane nature are the kinship of Lot and Abraham, land and conflict, and hospitality and sexuality. Common religious themes are blessing and curse, land as gift and deliverance.

The social similarity and range of strengths and weaknesses of Israel and Moab and Ammon is portrayed in the common human characteristics of Abraham and Lot. The traditions about kinship links between the people of Bethlehem and Moab, and about David's relations with the Ammonite royal house, reflect the vision of brotherly relationships found in Genesis 13. Regardless of the actual historical detail behind these traditions of kinship, the literary evidence, particularly in Ruth, suggests a clear ideological purpose on the part of certain tradents to uphold a commitment to a sense of community wider than just Israel.

159 A few studies stand out which avoid the Abrahamism of conventional commentary. Miscall (1983: 11-46) argues that the complexity of the picture of Abraham in Genesis 12 does not allow a definitive reading. Kunin (1995: 80) treats the relationship of Lot and Abraham in mythological terms and concludes that Lot is variously used in a positive, a mediating and a negative position (using terms developed by Levi Strauss). From the analyses which follow below, I conclude that the positive position is established by the compiler of Acts One and Two in Genesis 19, over against the neutral and negative positions displayed elsewhere.

160 Hanson (1986: 315) explains how the book of Ruth illustrates the struggle within Israel between more exclusive and more inclusive ideologies. He explains this struggle in terms of a dialectic within the traditional Yahwism set forward in Exodus between righteousness and compassion, which is mediated, in Hanson's view, by worship.
The stories of both eras recount the significance of kinship for legitimating land use.\(^{161}\) Strife over land use which is prominent in the major story about Lot and Abraham (Genesis 13) is precisely the issue in the first encounter of Israel and Moab (Numbers 22) and soon affects also Ammon (Judges 11). The Jordan valley features in both settings along with similar references to the fertility of the lands. Israel's acknowledgement of Moabite territory east of Jordan (Deut 2:9) is reflected in Abraham's campaign to rescue Lot. Just as strife between the herdsmen does not appear to represent enduring hostility, so reference to conflict between Israel and her eastern neighbours appears to be more a cliché in the prophets than a basic feature of the historical relationship. On this basis the peaceful settlement of conflict in Genesis 13 may call for a similar approach between Israel and her neighbours.

The theme of hospitality, which is central in Genesis 19, reflects the major concern of the variety of ancient traditions about Israel's first encounter with Moab. Moab's lack of hospitality reported in Deut 23:3 contrasts with the actions of Lot in Genesis 19. Is it possible that Genesis 19 represents a call to follow the example of Lot? Attention is drawn to this seemingly unlikely conjecture by the interweaving of a sexual element in both Gen 19:4-5 and Deut 23:1-3. The shame that the men of Sodom bring upon Lot's house by their lust matches the shame attributed to Moab and Ammon by their association with those who are sexually inadequate and those of illegitimate birth. The action of king Hanun of Ammon who shames David's emissaries by cutting their beards and skirts (2 Samuel 10) provides a concrete link between the texts of Genesis and Deuteronomy. Lot's treatment of the divine emissaries may be an example for his descendant to consider.

Turning to the religious themes, it is notable that in Tanakh, both the story of Abraham (Genesis 12) and the story of Moab (Numbers 22) begin by placing before the reader the ideology of blessing and curse. Both narratives indicate that this ideology is or will be recognised by both Israel and her neighbours.\(^{162}\) Moreover there are a number of literary connections between these sections of Genesis and Numbers which indicate that they are not totally independent. The construction of the story of Balaam around the building of altars and the pronouncement of oracles of blessing reflects the accounts of Genesis 12-13 where two oracles of promise form a parenthesis to the story of Abraham's journey and altar building. The role of Balaam as a seer is clearly stated in both the

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\(^{161}\) This is elaborated by Wilson (1977: 43) who asserts that lineage functions to order domestic and political relations between people and to justify organisation of land. Similarly Steinberg (1993: 10) notes that the story of Lot's offspring establishes a claim to land.

\(^{162}\) In addition to Gen 12:3 there are only two other references in Genesis to blessing and curse, first to distinguish between Shem and Canaan (Gen 9: 25-27) and later, between Jacob and Esau (27: 12-13; 27-29).
third and fourth oracles, including reference to God Most High (24:3-4; 15-16). In this way a unique link is created with Melchizedek, priest of God Most High, who like Balaam pronounces a blessing using the same divine name, which is very rare in the Torah (Gen 14:18-20). Where Gen 12:3 declares that blessing is a function of one's relationship to Abraham, the third oracle of Balaam traces blessing to a relationship with Israel (Num 24:9). In Numbers 24 we have a tradition which indicates that Moab was the first foreign people to receive the prophetic word about the divine blessing that adheres to the people of Israel. Moab also experiences this blessing through Israel's unexpected reverence for Moabite land, just as Lot is blessed by Abraham's surprising offer of the choice of land.

In the book of Genesis, the preservation of their seed and the provision of land are two major issues for both Abraham and Lot. Both concerns are the subject of divine promise for Abraham but not for Lot. However, both experience the same fulfillment regarding their seed and the same lack of fulfillment of the need for land. The stories of settlement in Deuteronomy 2 which describe the divine provision of land for the descendants of both Abraham and Lot provide a sequel to the birth stories of Gen 19 and 21. The oracles of Deuteronomy 2 declare that Moab and Ammon enjoy the same divine legitimation for possession of their lands as Israel. This declaration reflects the perspective of Gen 13:14-15 where the east Jordanian lands are considered within the orbit of divine gift. It is implicit in Moses' oracles (Deuteronomy 2) that the sons of Lot have gained settled lands even before the land promise to Abraham has been fulfilled. Here is a reflection of the Genesis story where Abraham is always waiting for fulfillment of promise, while Lot who has no promises is readily provided for.

I have shown above that in the prophetic traditions concerning Moab and Ammon, a final word of hope and restoration stands up against the great volume of lament and condemnation (Isa 16:4b-5; Jer 48:47). A lack of literary connection and historical context for these texts would dispose of them as mere curiosities if it were not for the fact that the Genesis story of Lot also moves from destruction and apparent demise to end with a note of hope. That the final word for Lot and for Moab and Ammon is one of mercy and deliverance, just as it is for Israel, I believe, must be fundamental to any adequate reading of the traditions.

4. Conclusion

Much of this chapter serves a negative purpose, to deconstruct the accretions that Abrahamicism has superimposed on the ancient traditions of Abraham and Lot, in order to place under a full light the ideological aspects of the reading of these traditions. I have shown how these aspects are evident both within the ancestral narrative itself and within the great range of modern commentary upon Genesis. The constructive benefit of the above analysis is that despite the overwhelming tendency toward a negative reading of the story of Lot over against Abraham, there is also scope for a positive reading, just as the Israelite traditions sympathetic to Moab and Ammon stand alongside those
hostile. The Lot traditions represent a special treatment of divine deliverance and mercy which is as significant as the promise tradition centred upon Abraham. Through Abraham and Lot the story affirms that both those inside and those outside the covenant have standing before YHWH. The ancestral narrative thus may contribute to reflection upon pluralism in the realm of religion and culture.

The specific examples of correspondence between the themes linking Abraham and Lot and those linking Israel and Moab and Ammon show that Israelite traditions concerning both eras recognise elements of commensality between Israel and those outside of the covenant community considered closest kin. Here is a basis for reading the stories of Lot and Abraham as commentary upon the corporate relationship, affirming a place before YHWH of Moab and Ammon. Such a reading of Genesis 19 as now follows, fully supports such an affirmation. The succeeding chapters consider relevant intertexts and the history of traditions behind Genesis 19 to further clarify the intentions of the narrator and to provide the basis for a concluding discussion of the sense of Israelite identity transmitted by the traditions regarding Lot, Moab and Ammon.
A LITERARY ANALYSIS OF GENESIS 19

1. An overview of Genesis 19

This chapter presents a literary structural analysis of the text of Genesis 19 which supports a reading of the story of Lot that differs greatly from those which are limited to a moralistic interpretation and from conventional treatments based upon ideological conceptions of Abraham found in the surrounding chapters. A critique of these other treatments is presented in many of the footnotes. An understanding of the methodology of this analysis is provided by Prewitt (1990: 92) who observes that earliest history writing was not oriented to content but to structure, so that 'structural hermeneutics can pursue meaning without serious consideration of sources'. He further explains that such a synchronic study takes Genesis as a specific cultural product, unrelated to its tradition history. Another perspective is provided by Leibowitz (1981: xxx) who explains that a synchronic study attempts, like Rabbinic commentary, 'to explain apparent anomalies of order and phraseology... on the grounds of literary technique and the aims and purposes of the narrative'.

While the diachronic nature of the history of the Lot traditions must be kept in mind here, Genesis 19 appears to be largely a unified literary product. As far as possible, I leave to later chapters my discussion of linguistic and literary connections between Genesis 19 and other Tanakh traditions. My discussion identifies the characters and outlines the plot and structure of the chapter before turning to an exegetical treatment. This exegesis is mostly limited to material sufficient to support the case for the distinct reading I offer which is largely based on the pattern of speeches in the first half of the chapter and the way they portray a positive characterisation of Lot. My analysis of the characterisation of Lot and of the key themes in Genesis 19 provides a fresh assessment of the ideological purpose of the narrator. I argue that behind the story of judgement on Sodom lies a subtext that presents the divine affirmation of Lot. I believe special significance attaches to the commentary within the story of Lot, that the deliverance of Lot and his family resulted from the mercy of God (19:16), a comment that is reinforced in the speech of Lot (19:19).

Structure and Plot in Genesis 19

The structural outline at the close of this chapter (p. 93) presents my analysis of Genesis 19 into two acts and an interlude. The smaller scenes within each act are delineated according to the particular set of characters involved and by the pattern whereby in each scene a tension develops and resolves. The artistic skill behind the scene structure is apparent in the regular pattern of speeches in Act One, three in each of four scenes. Here I include the implied speech in 19:3: 'And he (Lot) pressed
upon them greatly' because it is the only reported speech in the entire chapter and the inclusion of it maintains the precise pattern of dialogue and action throughout Act One. On the basis of this pattern we would expect to find Lot's spoken words recorded in verse three.

I have used the term 'Set up' to identify events in the narrative which serve to bring characters into relationship and dialogue. In each case the significance of these events is expressed in the speeches that follow. The term Action denotes the resolution of tension created in the dialogue. The fourth category of text, namely Commentary, refers to explanations from the narrator's stance which interrupt the story. There are four of these comments and while they are brief they carry a great deal of weight.

The outline shows that most of the chapter is devoted to Act One which is the story of Lot and his family in the context of the destruction of the cities of the plain around Sodom. This act arises and is resolved entirely upon the divine initiative represented in the drama by the two messengers. Act Two is only one third the length of Act One and develops entirely upon the human initiative of Lot and his two daughters. It tells how life in the city gives way to life in the cave as the family moves from the experience of rescue to reproduction. In regard to elements of the plot, the two acts are each self contained. In each case all the agenda items and initiatives introduced are resolved within the act. They are each quite independent of the Interlude which belongs to the story of Abraham in the previous chapter. Act Two does not describe the personal fate of Lot and his two daughters nor give notices of their deaths. It thus looks forward to the preservation of Lot's seed through the peoples of Moab and Ammon who enter the story of Israel in a much later setting.

The clear distinction in Genesis 19 between the main story of Lot and the interlude concerning Abraham is matched by the absence of any relationship between Lot and Abraham. These observations justify a treatment of Acts One and Two as a literary unit and are consistent with my view that the conception of Lot in the chapter differs from that found earlier. It is also appropriate to treat this unit separately from the surrounding chapters, since, although the existence of Lot and of Sodom is taken for granted in 19:1, the accounts of Acts One and Two are self contained. The material of the two acts is not dependent upon the previous chapter in regard to plot or characterisation and it has equally strong thematic links to Genesis 20.163

At the centre of the dramatic events of Genesis 19 is the encounter between Lot and his two guests who prove to be divine messengers and agents of destruction. The cast is supplemented by the men

163 In his treatment of the relationship between the story of Sodom and its surrounding context, Robert Alter (1986: 35-36) notes that there are also significant links between Genesis 19 and the following chapter, regarding hospitality, strangers at risk, sexual desire, the question of divine judgement on the righteous in a city (20:4), and of barrenness as judgement (20:18).
of Sodom in an aggressive role and the men betrothed to Lot's daughters in a passive role. Behind the story is the mysterious divine YHWH. Lot is introduced without identification, sitting at the gate of Sodom. The story thus assumes that the reader is familiar with this character but new elements appear with mention of Lot's house, wife, daughters and sons-in-law, all of whom are unnamed.\(^{164}\)

Lot's two guests are described, with the definite article, as the (two) messengers. Their acceptance of hospitality and the interest the mob takes in them shows that they first appear as ordinary mortals but Lot later learns that they are divine agents of deliverance and destruction (19:13, 16, 21). The introduction of the messengers seems to refer back to the three men of the previous chapter but in Genesis 18 these three are not called messengers. Moreover, in other texts the use of the definite article occurs with regard to divine messengers without prior reference (Gen 16:7; 21:17; 22:11; 32:1). While Gen 19:1 is dependent upon a prior notion of divine messenger that is assumed throughout the ancestral narrative, we may read the chapter in the first instance without assuming the messengers are those of Genesis 18.

Although the activity of the messengers is attributed to YHWH, he is presented not so much as an active character on the stage but as a cause operating from above (19:16, 24, 25). Here as elsewhere in the narrative, this YHWH belongs to the story and is not to be identified with the God of faith of a particular reader. The story of Lot holds special interest precisely because of the particular conception of the divine nature which it presents, incorporating both saving and destroying aspects.

2. An Exegetical and Thematic Treatment

*Act One, Genesis 19:1-26*

A major feature of this act is the dialogical pattern of three speeches, ABA', in each of the first four scenes. In particular we find the following four opening speeches which may be described as proposals (A):

Lot offers hospitality to the messengers (19:2);

The men of Sodom demand that Lot bring out his guests (19:5);

The messengers urge Lot to flee from Sodom (19:12-13);

One messenger urges Lot to escape for his life (19:17).

In each scene the initial response, B, contains a rejection of or obstacle to proposal A, thus creating a dramatic tension in the narrative. Speech A' in each case maintains the proposal A, with adjustment in the case of Scene Four. The crises are then resolved in the following action. The analysis of the four scenes and the speech pattern meets the criteria set forward by Prewitt (1990: 80-81).

\(^{164}\) Lot's move into the city is indicated in Gen 14:12 but the reader lacks any description or explanation of this transition.
64), in that it 'gives priority to textual features which provide consistency to the story, rhetorical completeness and structural precision'. In these terms this analysis is superior to the rather arbitrary chiasmic analyses of Genesis 18-19 which I critique in a later chapter.

Act One, Scene One (19:1-3)

The initiative of scene one lies with two messengers who arrive at Sodom unannounced, in the evening. At that moment Lot is sitting in the gate where the leaders of the city dealt with commercial and judicial affairs. Here for the first time in Genesis we find Lot to be a character with some initiative. Although others are present with him at the gate who presumably have greater status in Sodom (19:9), it is Lot who rose up to greet the visitors as soon as he saw them. The significance of this action is highlighted in a study by Bailey (1955: 4) who asserts that Lot may have exceeded his rights as a 'resident alien' (ger) by bringing the visitors into his house.\footnote{This reading is further elaborated by Victor Matthews (1992: 4)} Lot's gracious nature is indicated first by his body language: he rose to offer hospitality to the messengers with a quite deferential gesture, bowing low to the ground. Lot uses polite forms of address that indicate the visitors appeared to be men of some dignity: 'Behold now, my lords'; 'I pray you'; 'your servant'. The warmth of Lot's proposal of hospitality (A) shows in his threefold invitation to 'turn aside into (my) house'; 'tarry all night'; and 'wash your feet'.\footnote{While Wenham (1994: 53-4) acknowledges the warmth in Lot's offer of hospitality, he then arbitrarily assigns the worst possible motive to Lot, that he was scared of what may happen to him if the angels [sic] do not stay. Such assertions cannot be justified from the text.}

Unexpectedly, Lot's proposal meets with rejection by the messengers (B), who intend to stay in public accommodation rather than private.\footnote{In a discussion of hospitality, the Talmud reflects the conventional prejudice in favour of Abraham. 'Before a great man, one may not hesitate to accept an invitation' (Baba Mezi'a VII 86b). However, it is not unexpected that travellers who readily accept hospitality at midday might demur at the offer of a room for the night. A report of Job's similar hospitality shows that it was not unknown for strangers to sleep in the street (Job 31:32).} However, Lot is undeterred and presses his offer of hospitality strongly (A'). The reader can imagine behind the report a bold speech like that of 19:19-20 which also obtains a change of plans from the messengers. The resolution of the scene is related using the language of Lot's initial invitation: 'they turned aside to him'; and 'they came into his house', thus fulfilling the initial proposal, A. The eventual, full acceptance of Lot's hospitality is confirmed by the messengers eating his food, showing that his offer was not only sincere but perfectly acceptable. From the setting at the gate, the tension built into the dialogue and the repetition used in narrating the outcome, there can be no doubt that the narrator intends to present
Lot as a most hospitable person. The reader also knows that the scene relates a divine encounter and will see the initial refusal of hospitality as a test for Lot, which he passes magnificently.

Act One, Scene Two (19:4-11)

The second episode of the story tells of the assault of the men of Sodom on Lot's house. The set up of this scene is emphatic in one respect, that the mob outside Lot's house included all the men of the city. First we read 'the men of the city the men of Sodom' in which the definite articles suggest the entire male population. Not only is this a duplicated subject but it receives emphasis by coming before the verb. This is followed up by three further phrases: 'from the youngest to the oldest'; 'all the people'; 'from the outskirts'. This is a special case of hyperbole which attracts notice. Although in reality one might expect various degrees of decadence among the population and only a minority with the implied homosexual orientation, the narrator's use of hyperbole makes the entire population responsible for the corruption of Sodom.

The men of Sodom have come to Lot's door seeking sexual liaison with his guests (A), an action which contrasts with the motive of hospitality. With reference to the similar scene in Judges 19, Niditch (1982: 369) interprets the assault as an active, aggressive form of inhospitality. Stone (1995: 100) recognises also a power play by the men of Sodom in their attempt to shame Lot through the abuse of those who are guests in his house.

Despite the dire threat, Lot does not hesitate to stand outside his door in vulnerability before the men to persuade them to desist (B). The wording of Lot's admonition echoes the warning of Samuel to Israel under their new king (Gen 19:7; 1 Sam 12:25). It is at first surprising that precisely

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168 A similar juxtaposition of hospitality and sexuality appears in the story of Abraham and Sarah in Egypt and in later traditions about Moab and Ammon (Num 25:1-3; Deut 23:1-4). We may not assume that the narrator of the Genesis story had the same abhorrence of sodomy found in Leviticus, just as the account of Abraham's marriage to a half-sister (Gen. 20:12) does not recognise the prohibition of Lev. 20:17.


170 A number of commentators, such as Wenham (1994: 55), acknowledge Lot's courage here although condemning him elsewhere. In a city hostile to strangers, Leibowitz (1972: 176) considers Lot to be courageous in defending normal hospitality.

171 The similarity between these verses makes a nonsense of the comment by Sacks (1990: 132) that Lot's politeness to the men of Sodom covers a lack of courage which makes it impossible for him to bring new ways to Sodom.
where Lot's strength of character seems to be greatest he offers his daughters in the place of his guests. Lot's statement that the girls were still virgins seems to appeal to the lust of the men but also represents his patriarchal authority to determine their fate. A moral consideration of this episode must consider that Lot put his duty as host above duty as father.  

Ignoring Lot's appeal to them as brothers, the men of Sodom ridicule his attempt to judge their behaviour and turn their threat from the messengers toward Lot himself (A'). Dod (1888: 188) states that Lot was nicknamed 'the Censor'. He finds himself derided as a sojourner and that his status in the city is not secure. When the men of Sodom resort to violent action the story turns for the first time to the initiative of the guests. We read that they (plural) put forth their hand (singular) and pulled Lot back into the safety of the house. Note how in these several verses the door and roof of the house symbolise security but, like Lot, are found wanting in this respect. The act of rescue is matched by an act of judgement in which the men are blinded, a pattern repeated in Scenes Three and Four. The judgement of blindness on both small and great recalls the hyperbole of 19:4 and matches 'all the inhabitants' destroyed in Sodom (19:25). Scene Two thus resolves with the rejection of the opening proposal and punishment of those responsible. Meanwhile, in the midst of city life Lot experiences rescue by divine agent.

Act One, Scene Three (19:12-16)

In this scene we find the second speech from the messengers who finally describe their intentions. The messengers first urge Lot to take his family and possessions out of the city (19:12; A). Their words of advice contain the major divine challenge that Lot receives in his entire story which is nothing less than a call to forsake his home and Sodom before it is destroyed. The messengers then reveal and repeat their role as agents of divine destruction because of the cry that has reached YHWH. This cry, as always in Tanakh, is not the clamour of the wicked but the cry of the oppressed for legal redress. In this chapter, YHWH is concerned primarily with a matter of injustice rather than with some form of sexual immorality. Through the announcement of the messengers Lot becomes the recipient of a divine revelation.

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172 Sarna (1989: 136) states that Lot's offer is not to tempt the men but to underscore the seriousness of hospitality.

173 Speiser (1964: 140) notes various problems with the word 'son-in-law', which he omits. Other supposed difficulties in the Hebrew word order may be attributed to emphasis.

174 The same Hebrew term is used to refer to the cry of the blood of Abel (4:10), the cry of Esau (27:34) and of the starving Egyptians (41:55). The term also appears in 18:21, but a different though similar root occurs in 18:20. From prophetic references, Gossai (1995: 91) concludes that 'cry' has wide and varied meanings.
It is night time as Lot receives the first warning of destruction and goes out to warn his sons-in-law, whom the reader has not previously met (B). The sons-in-law are identified as 'takers of his daughters', a unique phrase inTanakh, which allows that they may have been betrothed to the two virgin daughters. Lot's speech to his sons-in-law has several functions in the narrative. It develops the concern with family introduced in v. 12; shows Lot taking seriously the warning he has received; reinforces the earlier characterisation of Lot as a person who speaks up when necessary and indicates that Lot has perceived the role of YHWH in the person of his guests. The initial proposal in this scene finds a first obstacle in the indifference of Lot's sons-in-law (19:15-16) but this should not be taken as a mark against Lot.

Lot remains in Sodom that night but since his guests are still with him he is not yet at risk. The situation changes in the morning when the messengers hasten Lot and strengthen their warning to flee with two imperatives: 'Get up...'; 'take your wife... ' (A). The danger is now made personal: 'lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city'. Despite the urgency of the warning, Lot lingered but it is inappropriate to read this report as a condemnation since it describes the point of his greatest crisis. The report rather serves the purpose of making Lot's deliverance entirely a divine initiative. Scene Three resolves with the forcible imposition of the original proposal: the messengers deliver Lot and family from Sodom. Here we meet the first of the narrator's commentaries in which he attributes Lot's deliverance to divine compassion (hemelah).

The same verb is used of Jacob's taking a wife (27:46). The Hebrew term allows that the daughters may be betrothed but not necessarily married and thus leaves their status unclear. In a similar way, Hyrcanus is described as father-in-law to Herod before the wedding of Herod and Mariamne had taken place (Josephus, Antiquities, Book xiv, ch. xiii, section 1). The LXX and Targum of Jonathan assume there were four daughters because of the reference in 19:15 to the two daughters 'which are here' However, this phrase may imply a contrast not with two other daughters elsewhere but with the sons-in-law who were outside the house ('Lot went out', 19:14). The notion of two additional married daughters is unnecessary to the plot and upsets the balance between Lot and his daughters on the one hand and Lot's wife and two sons-in-law on the other.

A negative reading is illustrated by Coats (1985: 123) who asserts that Lot is here 'an object of derision, a person of no weight or consequence'. This remark is quite erroneous, for within the ancestral narrative the eight references to laughter all express the ambivalence in the minds of those laughing, mostly Abraham and Sarah, and are not intended to comment on the messenger (Gen 18:13, 15; 17:17; 18:12; 21:6). One reference describes Ishmael's treatment of Isaac, which has been interpreted in different ways but never to imply something derogatory about Isaac (21:9).

Jewish tradition is instructive here since it provides a positive interpretation: that Lot's departure was delayed until morning because he pleaded all night for Sodom (Lev. R. 23:9).
Act One, Scene Four (19:17-23)

The change to a new scene is marked here by the common term vayehi (and it happened ... v. 17) but in his speech the messenger tries a third time to motivate Lot to escape for his life (A; compare 19:12, 19:15). This advice is expressed in four distinct clauses with specific warnings that Lot must not look back, nor (sideways) for refuge on the plain, but only (up) to the safety of the hills. Since the opening proposal is eventually fulfilled when Lot escapes safely to Zoar without looking back, I take v. 23 to be the conclusion of this scene. In Scene Four eleven out of thirteen references to the messengers are in the singular which makes the plural forms in the first part of v.17 and v.18 appear out of place. The first of these may be explained as a transition from v.16. The second cannot be readily emended and the clash of plural and singular may stand as an expression of the one divine in the two messengers.178 So Westermann (1985a: 242ff) associates the divine presence with the message rather than the messengers.179

Just when the reader might expect Lot to flee to the hills as directed, a crisis emerges with Lot's response to the messengers, 'Oh not so, my Lord' (B). This fourth and final speech is also his longest, due to the multiplicity of arguments that Lot advances. The speech is remarkable for its bold stance before the divine and it echoes Lot's daring speech to the men of Sodom earlier in the story where also he takes the initiative to propose his own alternative.180 In Barthes' terms (1986: 63), the speech marks Lot by introducing a disequilibrium into the story. Lot first acknowledges the divine grace and loving kindness the messengers have shown towards him in saving his life. He then declares his fear that 'the evil' will overtake him and cause him to die on the way to the hills.

178 An emendation to the singular is not acceptable since the plural is not just a suffix of one letter but an entire Hebrew word (zalhem, unto them) and the plural is sustained also in the Septuagint. The NEB and NASB translations harmonise 19:18 with the reading 'my lords' (as in 19:2) which assumes that the long final 'a' in zadanay results from a vowel lengthening due to pause at the end of a phrase. This explanation is open to doubt as this is the only place in Tanakh where zadanay comes in the final position. In any case the verse remains inconsistent with the singular number in surrounding verses.

179 These observations weigh against the arithmetical approach of some commentators who conclude from notices in 18:2, 22, 33 that YHWH is to be identified as the messenger not present in 19:1. References in Gen 21:17 and 22:11 show that the messenger of YHWH cannot be distinguished from God in heaven.

180 Lot's speech is surpassed in length only by the speeches of Abraham to the king of Sodom (14:22-24), to the Lord about Sodom (18:23-25) to Abimelech (20:11-13) and to his servant (24:6-8).
and proposes Zoar as an alternative refuge. The town is conveniently near and small and Lot begs permission to escape there to save his life. The four parts of this speech balance the four parts of the messenger's speech that precedes it.

In Lot's acknowledgement of deliverance the narrator not only brings the religious element of his story to its highest point but also presents it in the form of a testimony which is unsurpassed in either Tanakh or the New Testament. Of the two clauses, the reference 'found grace in your sight' is something of a cliché found frequently in Tanakh in polite speech, mostly in reference to human relationships. In these contexts 'grace' (Heb. len) has the meaning of favourable treatment but does not necessarily carry the added weight of 'unmerited favour'. The reference to divine loving kindness or loyalty (hesed) in Lot's speech is also the first such in Tanakh and together with the divine compassion of 19:16 represents the narrator's interest in mercy, which I take up in a later chapter.

The second declaration Lot makes is that he cannot escape to the hills because he may die on the way. The Hebrew clause is unique in Tanakh and reads: 'lest the evil cleave to me'. The verb 'to cleave' is used in a similar way of the plagues of Egypt, which the YHWH warns will cleave to Israel if they do not observe the Torah (Deut 28:60). The use of the definite form 'the evil' suggests at first that Lot is referring to the impending destruction of the city announced by the messengers. However, the reader cannot understand why Lot considers himself at risk from the destruction on Sodom if he takes their advice, since they have already twice delivered him. It appears that Lot has in mind a general foreboding and the term 'the evil' is an idiomatic reference to possible calamity, perhaps similar to the Hebrew 'the adversary' (nasâ'â).\footnote{See Zech 3:2 and eleven occurrences in Job 1 & 2.}

This brings us to the final parts of Lot's speech in which he acknowledges that his eyes are already set on Zoar as an alternative refuge to the hills of Moab, which rise to over 800 metres. Lot argues that Zoar is near, which suits him, and that it is small and might be overlooked in the judgement.\footnote{The etiological element in this pericope, which has occupied many commentators, has little significance for the reading I am offering. It is well treated by Long (1968: 20-21).} His somewhat obsequious speech comes to a climax with his request for a special dispensation requiring a change in the divine purpose of destruction through which the entire plain, including Zoar, is in danger.

In Scene Four, the resolution of crisis comes within the response of the messenger (A') rather than in the action following, as in earlier scenes. The effectiveness of Lot's speech in changing the intentions of the messenger is expressed in an unusual idiom: 'I have lifted up your face (nasâ'â)


**Genesis 19**

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Concerning this thing (Gen 19:21). This rare combination of two common Hebrew words appears elsewhere in Job 42:9, which the NRSV renders: 'the Lord accepted Job’s prayer'. Significantly the subject is the divine in each case. The entire story of Lot may be interpreted by the encounter of Scene Four: YHWH showed favour towards Lot, not only in approving his choice of Zoar, but also in rescuing him from Sodom. YHWH was so completely on Lot's side that we find here a unique acknowledgement of divine dependence on human action: 'I cannot do anything until you get there'.

**Act One, Scene 5 (19:24-25)**

Both Scenes Five and Six parallel the action reports at the close of earlier scenes but they each have only one character and lack dialogue and tension. In Scene Five YHWH acts to destroy the cities and the land of the plain, as foreshadowed in 19:13 and 17. As noted earlier, this YHWH cannot finally be distinguished from the messengers as agents of destruction. The two verses in Scene Five are distinguished by their separate focus on the heavenly and the earthly origins of destruction but there is no essential conflict between the two. Together they focus upon the cities in the plural which further distinguishes Scene Five from the earlier ones. The report of the overthrow in 19:25 has a poetic form, referring alternatively to the social and the natural orders and then to the destruction of life in both domains.

**Act One, Scene 6 (19:26)**

The subject of this scene is Lot's wife who despite a brief reference is perhaps the best known character in the story, although the last of the family to be introduced and the first to exit from the stage. She is unnoticed in the initial provision of hospitality by Lot (19:3) but participates in the rescue from the city (19:15, 16). The language of 19:26 is unexpected where instead of 'looked behind her' we find 'looked from behind him'. This may express the sublimation of Lot's wife under the character of Lot. However, it may also be seen as the one action in which she distinguishes herself from Lot by turning her eyes away from his back. In any case, it is only in the event of her demise that Lot's wife is treated as an individual.

A moralistic reading will attribute the demise of Lot's wife to her disregard of the messenger's advice (19:17). However, such a reading is problematic (contra Wenham, 1994: 59) since it

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183 For Sacks, the messenger's approval of Lot's removal to Zoar, the little city, represents a compromise between God's ideals and what man is capable of, which Sacks sees as a main thread holding the book of Genesis together to this point.

184 Through the Hebrew root semaḥ (a bud) Gen 19:25 is linked to the story of creation and curse in Gen.2:5, 9; 3:18.
assumes that the warning given to Lot in the singular implicitly includes his wife and it presupposes a divine attitude entirely opposite to that shown in the messenger's accommodation to Lot's desire, even though Lot goes against the instruction to stay in the plain. The destruction of Lot's wife may therefore be read as an expression of the same divine prerogative which elsewhere is directed to deliver Lot regardless of whether or not he deserves it. On the other hand, it may be no more than an element of plot essential to the set up of Act Two where Lot is without a partner for reproduction.

Act One Summary

My literary analysis of Act One produces clear results regarding the major themes of this Act and the way in which the reader is to understand the character Lot and his relation to the divine represented by the messengers. That the final form of Act One is concerned much more with Lot as an individual than with his family members is everywhere evident. In particular, Lot's wife and daughters are not included in the explanation of 19:16 and they are omitted from the final two clauses of the verse. A similar pattern occurs in 19:17. Most apparent at the heart of the story of Act One is Lot's experience of deliverance by divine mercy, as portrayed in both Scenes Two and Three, which theme overshadows that of destruction.

The placement and balance of Scenes Two and Three at the centre of the action of Act One highlights the importance of the deliverance theme in Genesis 19. The superb literary style of these scenes is apparent in several ways. First there are chiasmic structures through which the narrator focuses upon Lot's peril and his deliverance. In the pattern of Scene Two we find the men at the door (4f and 11), Lot goes out and in the door (6 and 10), and proposal and response (7f and 9), which structure centres upon the crisis between Lot and the men of Sodom. In Scenes Three and Four we find the messengers' speeches (12-13 and 21-22); rejection of warnings (14 and 19b-20); warning, lingering and mercy (15-16a and 17b-18-19a) and in the centre, deliverance (16b, 17a). This chiasmus centres upon the theme of deliverance as an act of divine mercy.

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185 Wenham's further conjecture that the demise of Lot's wife creates sympathy for Lot as a man 'who did not enjoy whole-hearted support from his wife' is unfounded in the case of a character whose relation to Lot is totally unremarked in the narrative.

186 The demise of Lot's wife fits the pattern I noted above, whereby the named and unnamed characters are treated differently. Judgement of death befalls only anonymous persons and groups. Examples of named individuals under judgement who receive mercy are Adam and Eve, Cain, Pharaoh, Hagar, Ishmael, Abimelech, Esau, Reuben and Judah. On this basis the sweeping destruction of the Flood and of Sodom should be understood as a literary feature and not treated as a moral problem.
Secondly, the link between Scenes Two and Three is made very strong as the parallel of the ABA’ speech pattern is extended into the threefold action that makes up the resolution in both reports. In Scene Two the men ‘put out their hand’, they ‘cause Lot to come in to them into the house’ and ‘they shut the door’ (19:10). In Scene Three, they ‘seize his hand’, ‘cause him to go out’ and ‘set him at rest outside-the-walls of the city’ (19:16). In both rescue reports, deliverance occurs as divine and human hands are linked and there is a balance between the movement into the house, away from the hostile social environment, and the movement out of the city, away from the hostile natural environment. In the first case, the door represents the safety of the confines within the house; in the second, the walls represent the safety of the space outside the city. This balance is maintained in the subsequent reports of divine judgement (19:11 and 19:23-25, Scene Five).

Thirdly, the theme of deliverance comes to the fore through the repeated use of the verb ‘to bring forth’. In both Scene Two and Three, the initiative passes from the human to the divine as the role of bringing out moves from Lot to the messengers. At first, Lot is ostensibly in command as the city men demand that Lot bring forth his guests and he offers instead to bring forth his daughters (19:5, 8). Then suddenly we find Lot himself is dependent on being brought in by the messengers (v. 10). Similarly, in Scene Three the messengers treat Lot as capable of bringing his family out of Sodom (v. 12), but finally he is dependent on their bringing him forth (v.17).

Over against the theme of deliverance, in my view the theme of destruction is quite secondary and cannot even be considered as a balanced parallel. Although the city and the family are both constant elements in all six scenes of Act One, references to the demise of Sodom are limited to Scenes Three and Five. In Scene Three the impending destruction functions to provide a motivation for Lot’s interaction first with his sons-in-law then with the messengers. The lack of a dialogue or tension or moral judgement in both Scenes Five and Six shows that they serve only to close the tensions created in earlier scenes. The secondary importance of both Scenes Five and Six, with their focus upon destruction, is also indicated by the absence of reference to the time of day which is a feature of every other scene (19:1, 4, 15, 23, 33, 34, 35). For the story of Genesis 19, the judgement of Sodom has already been decided (18:20,21; 19:13), and it is not at issue in the extensive dialogues and crises of Scenes One to Four.

The secondary importance of the destruction theme in Genesis 19 is matched by the incidental nature of the occurrences of the name Sodom found in the story. The name is entirely absent from Scenes Three and Four. Scene Two makes only one reference to the (men of the) city (19:4) but this reference is immediately followed by an identification: ‘the men of Sodom’, creating an unusual double subject which suggests a gloss. In Scene Three, where one might expect an identification of Sodom as the wicked city, we find instead seven references to the object of destruction as ‘the city’ or ‘this place’, each in the singular. References to Sodom in vv. 1 and 24 are consistent with the view that the place name, Sodom, and the story of the destruction of the cities serve primarily to create a
setting in which the narrator can present a particular view of the character Lot and the relationship of the human and the divine.

The fate of Sodom is not presented as any concern of Lot but rather is seen in the dialogue of Gen 18:23-33 and in the Interlude as an issue linked closely to Abraham. The actantial analysis below illustrates the difference between the plot structure linking Abraham and Sodom and that linking Lot and Sodom.\(^{187}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lot and Sodom</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sender</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messengers</td>
<td>God</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Opponent</strong></td>
<td>Receiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men of the city</td>
<td>Lot</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abraham and Sodom</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject</strong></td>
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<td>Receiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abraham</td>
<td>Sodom</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The two stories of Lot's deliverance in Genesis 19 recall the story in Genesis 14 where it is Abraham rather than the messengers who deliver Lot. Here also Lot has a passive role, both as a captive of the kings of the north and as one delivered from danger. The three stories together suggest that deliverance is a central theme of the Lot stories.

*The Interlude (Genesis 19:27-29)*

Like the closing scenes of Acts One and Two, the Interlude lacks speech and provides only brief, formal notices to conclude the story of Abraham's dialogue with YHWH (18:22-33). The verb 'to see' provides a catch word link to v. 26. Abraham now makes his final appearance in Lot's story as from a distance he looks down upon the smoking devastation of Sodom and Gomorrah and all the land of the plain. The reference to Gomorrah also links this scene to texts outside the chapter (13:10; 18:20). The narrator provides no commentary upon the demise of Sodom, but the choice of the rare term 'smoke' (qînîm) suggests the concept of devotion (hêrem) in the Deuteronomic narratives (Deut

\(^{187}\) This kind of analysis follows the work of Greimas (1966) and its application to Tanakh texts is explored by Jobling (1978) and Barthes (1986).
2:34; 3:6). This term derives from the verb qatar ('to burn incense') and contrasts with the common verb 'to smoke' which denotes heat and may indicate anger (e.g. Gen 15:17).

Gen 19:29 contains the last of the four commentaries in the story of Lot. Although v. 29 incorporates some language found in Act One: 'destroy' (19:13; 13:10); 'sent' (a Piel imperfect as in 19:13); and 'the overthrow' (19:21, 25), it is clearly distinguished by the Hebrew paragraph marker: 'And it came to pass', by the divine name: šelohim, not found elsewhere in the narratives about Lot, and by the phrase 'cities of the plain' (19:25; 13:12). Since it is concerned with Abraham, not Lot, and is dependent on references to Abraham outside the chapter, I argue that 19:29 is extraneous to the rest of Genesis 19. Most noticeable is the abrupt change in ideology: Lot was delivered not out of divine compassion or loyalty (19:16, 19) but because of his kinship with meritorious Abraham. This verse highlights the difference between the theme of righteousness linked to Abraham and the conception of divine mercy linked to Lot. To the extent that the quality of divine mercy becomes dependent on the merit of another person, it is diminished and the person of Lot is devalued as unworthy of divine mercy for his own sake.

Act Two Genesis 19:30-38

The opening verse records Lot's last journey, from Zoar to the hills. The report of the transition falls into two parts:

30a Now Lot went up out of Zoar
and he lived in the hills,
with his two daughters.

30b For he was afraid to live in Zoar,
so he lived in the cave,
with his two daughters

By means of repetition, the narrator emphasises that Lot has left Zoar and sounds an ominous note concerning Lot's two daughters that prepares the reader for what is to come. Hills and cave signify

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188 Note also 'the cities in which Lot dwelt' which echoes Gen 13:12 and 14:12.

189 The notion of the merit of Abraham is explicitly acknowledged by Sarna (1966: 150) and Hallo (1981: 133).

190 This text has provided the foundation for the theme of Abraham's prayer power and merit which becomes a major element in later Jewish tradition. Some commentators have linked the comment of 19:29 to Abraham's dialogue with YHWH on behalf of the righteous in Sodom (18:23-33), which also reflects a priestly role for Abraham. However, in the dialogue Abraham bases his appeal on divine justice, not upon his own personal righteousness and there is nothing to link this appeal directly to a concern for Lot's fate. If Lot was delivered because of his kinship with meritorious Abraham, then the question of justice has no place.
that the three characters are firstly removed to a remote location, then brought into a dark and intimate setting. East of Jordan caves were commonly used as residences and the use of the two definite articles may suggest notoriety, in the minds of the reader, regarding those hills and that cave.\textsuperscript{191}

In her opening speech, which in this case is a monologue, the older sister announces that no one outside the family has survived and proposes that she and her sister resort to the extreme means of incest in order to preserve the seed of their father (19:32). The younger sister shares responsibility for plying Lot with wine on the first night when the older one takes her turn in his bed. Remarkably, the drunken Lot is still virile enough to meet his daughter's requirements, which factor belies the fictional element.\textsuperscript{192} The older daughter successfully negotiates the sexual encounter without Lot's knowledge and the scene closes (19:33). The second scene opens the following day, again with a speech by the older daughter, who encourages the younger to match the encounter of the previous night (19:34). It concludes in a similar way. The repetition of the incest indicates that fulfillment for each daughter is as important as preservation of seed for Lot, since for the older to fall pregnant was not sufficient. The third scene tells how the objectives of the daughters are met with the births and naming of Moab and Ben Ammi and then identifies them as ancestors of the Moabites and Ammonites.

Unlike Act One, this act has no pattern of dialogue-crisis-resolution, no commentary from the narrator and no messengers to convey a clear viewpoint, so that commentators differ widely as to the viewpoint of the narrator within this act.\textsuperscript{193} Those who interpret Lot in negative terms readily see the reference to incestuous origins as a form of Israelite polemic against Moab and Ammon.\textsuperscript{194} Against such a reading is the fact that elsewhere in Tanakh where Moab and Ammon are condemned, no reference to such origins appears. There are three particular features of Act Two

\textsuperscript{191} In his commentary, Janzen (1993: 65) too easily identifies the cave symbolism with the reference in Isa 2:12-22 where the cave is a refuge for the proud and lofty brought low by divine judgement. There is no indication in Genesis 19 of divine judgement upon Lot.

\textsuperscript{192} Baron (1957: 90) notes one argument from Muslim tradition that Lot could not possibly be so drunk as not to recognise his daughters and yet retain sexual potency.

\textsuperscript{193} The function of the incest taboo in Tanakh traditions is explored in psychoanalytic terms by Rashkow (1993).

\textsuperscript{194} E.g. Dillman (1897: 113). Goldziher (1967: 253-4) attributes polemic in Hebrew narrative to the need to survive the pressures of surrounding nations. Sarna (1989: 139) rejects reading the story as a polemic and affirms that no blame attaches to Lot. However, Sarna avoids a positive reading by declaring that it is difficult to understand the point of this story.
which indicate its major purpose is to establish that the nations of Moab and Ammon are close kin to Israel.\textsuperscript{195} First, this is a datum found only here in the whole of Tanakh. Second, the absence of any account of the personal fate of Lot and his daughters shows the birth reports to be integral rather than incidental to the story.\textsuperscript{196} Third, in the wider narrative structure of the toledot (generations) of Terah (Gen 11:27 - 25:10), which deliberately incorporates Moab and Ammon with Israel, Act Two provides a necessary closure to the fundamental theme of the preservation of seed so far as it applies to Lot.

\textit{Integrating elements in Genesis 19}

Unity between the two acts is established by their common literary features, including speeches which create dramatic tension later resolved by actions. At the close of each act are scenes which formally report without speech the outcome of the action. A similar balance is found in both acts: a ratio of two substantial speech scenes for each brief final notice. In both acts there are etiological elements but the major connection between them is their common focus upon the relationship of Lot and his daughters, further strengthened by the use of irony. Other characters are absent from Act Two, namely Lot's wife, the messengers, the men of Sodom, the sons-in-law and YHWH. Our assessment of the entire chapter should then give primary attention to the story of Lot's interaction with his daughters.

\textit{Crisis and resolution}

My analysis of the speech patterns in Genesis 19 has shown that the dialogue in each of the first four scenes of Act One features a point of crisis which represents a challenge to Lot. Points of tension are also created in the actions that are narrated so that there are as many as ten points of crisis encompassing Acts One and Two, as follows.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Scene One:} How will Lot respond when the messengers refuse his hospitality? (v. 2);
  \item \textbf{Scene Two:} What will Lot do when the men of Sodom desire his guests? (v. 5);
  \item \hspace{0.5cm} Will Lot survive when he goes out the door to reason with the men? (v. 8)
  \item \hspace{0.5cm} What will Lot do when they disregard his appeal? (v. 9);
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{195} Long (1968: 51-52) concludes that the etiological element is fundamental to this narrative and that it is concerned not just to explain the names Moab and Ammon but to establish their tribal origins.

\textsuperscript{196} Lot is the first major male character in Genesis for whom there is no record of death or of his age relative to his father or sons. In this respect Lot is distinguished from his two cousins, Ishmael (25:17) and Isaac (35:28). The case of Ishmael excludes the explanation that Lot's age is not enumerated because he is outside the chosen line.
Scene Three: How will Lot respond when urged to leave Sodom? (v. 12)
How will Lot respond when his sons-in-law do not take him seriously? (v. 14);
Will Lot miss his opportunity when he lingers in the morning? (v. 16);

Scene Four: Will the messengers be offended when Lot bargains about going to Zoar? (v. 18);

Act Two: What will become of Lot in the cave? (v. 30);
Will the daughters carry off their plan effectively? (v. 32).

On the basis of the qualities of sustained tension and balance of judgement and rescue which are
found in Genesis 19, De Vaux (1965: 168) declared this chapter to be one of the finest narratives in
Genesis. We may objectify this observation by comparing this chapter with others in the ancestral
narrative in which one of the 'characters' is a divine messenger. These are the two stories about
Hagar (Gen 16:1-16; 21:9-21) and two of the stories about Abraham (18:1-16; 22:1-19). Genesis
19 is distinguished as the longest of these similar narratives. My analysis compares the density of
reported actions and of speeches and also the relative number of main verbs within the speeches,
which is a measure of the degree to which the narrative is presented in dramatic speech form as over
against report form. The results of this analysis are shown in the following table where the decimal
figures refer to the number of occurrences per ten verses of text.\(^{197}\) I also show the total numbers of
crises created by interactions between characters in the narratives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Genesis 19</th>
<th>Genesis 16</th>
<th>Genesis 21</th>
<th>Genesis 18</th>
<th>Genesis 22</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main actions</strong></td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speeches</strong></td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main verbs</strong></td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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| **Tensions** | 10 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 |

The table shows that Genesis 19 is undistinguished in regard to the amount of action it describes.
The number of speeches is comparatively modest but the high number of verbs in speeches reflects
the considerable length of some of the speeches. Against such a typical background the high
number of crisis points stands out. This analysis enables us to draw the story of Lot alongside that
of Abraham which later Jewish tradition codified as a series of ten tests (see Jubilees 17:17).

\(^{197}\) A connected series of statements by one character, not interrupted by another action or speech, is
counted as one speech. I have enumerated only those verbs that refer directly to the actions and the
speeches of the characters within the setting of the story itself, excluding those used in a subordinate
way, for example, in commentary from the narrator referring to causes or possibilities outside the
present time of the story itself.
Through these tests Abraham is presented as a model of faith and righteousness and his story takes on a *torah* (teaching) function. The story of Lot may also serve a *torah* function since Lot, like Abraham, is one who lives out the life of a sojourner and is caught up in experiences of divine justice and mercy. Such a function is illustrated in subsequent tradition by the few references to Lot in the Mishnah and Talmud and in the New Testament and the Qur'an which I return to in the final chapter.

**Reversal and Irony**

Aycock (1983: 114) notes a reversal regarding hospitality where at first the messengers are the strangers dependent on Lot and his family but later the family are the strangers dependent on the hospitality of those in Zoar, via the messengers. At his most honourable moment when Lot boldly stands outside his door to save his guests he finds himself unequal to the task and instead he is saved by them. Gossai (1995: 85) notes that Lot sees the evil in the actions of the men of Sodom but not in his own actions regarding his daughters. Although Lot at first feared that destruction would meet him in the hills, once he reaches the cave his experiences of incest ensure that he becomes a partner in creating new life.

Reversal is especially marked in the relationship of Lot to his daughters. In both Scenes Two and Three (19:8; 19:14) the deliverance of Lot occurs only after the lives of his daughters have been put at risk, first by the men of Sodom and later by the indifference of their husbands. Lot had imagined, however unwillingly, that his daughters were at his disposal (19:8), but finally, in his own bed, Lot is at the disposal of his daughters. Gossai (1995: 99) observes that their determination contrasts with Lot's indecisiveness: they choose life while, in effect, Lot chooses death. The availability of too many men as sexual partners in the mob (19:4) contrasts with the lack of men for procreation up in the hills (19:31). Wenham (1994: 61) notes that by their deliverance from Sodom, the honour of the daughters is preserved but finally they themselves sacrifice their honour through incest with their father. Through their sons, the daughters find their salvation only after placing at risk their relationship to Lot.

3. **The Characterisation of Lot**

The foregoing exegesis and literary analyses provides a basis for a fresh appraisal of the characterisation of Lot which is a crucial element in determining the narrator's intention. I first respond to the vast majority of commentaries which have set the agenda for this study by their moralistic treatment of the characters. I then turn to the affirmative view of Lot encompassed by the deliverance theme to show how it is reinforced in an artful and subtle manner in the interaction of Lot and the messengers found in each of Scenes One to Four.
Against a moralistic reading

My reading of Genesis 19 has drawn attention to a number of affirmative elements in the characterisation of Lot, namely his initiative, warmth and persistence in offering hospitality despite initial rejection, his sense of duty as a host and brave vulnerability in challenging the mob at his door, his decisive action in warning his sons-in-law although they deride him; and his robust appeal to the messengers regarding Zoar, despite the extremity of his position. In these ways the narrator characterises Lot with a strength of will comparable to that of Jacob or any other character in Tanakh. At the same time Lot is especially affirmed in relation to the divine by the two stories of deliverance which are at the heart of Act One, centred around the word of revelation concerning the destruction of the city. While it is fair to say that throughout the narrative, Lot's actions are in response to the agenda of others, these observations show the inadequacy of commentaries that impose a passive characterisation upon Lot.198

Alongside the positive characterisation of Lot, the narrative casts Lot in a negative light in his relation to his daughters. In Act One, precisely where Lot's courage seems greatest, he offers his daughters in the place of his guests. In Act Two, the honour of receiving a warning revelation and repeated experiences of deliverance from the city seems to be completely obliterated by the indignity of the incest scene. On these grounds commentators move quickly from a passive reading of Lot to moral condemnation, sometimes with very colourful language.199 A moderate example is provided by Driver (1913: 205) who states that Lot was 'selfish, weak, worldly'; 'he brought temptation and troubles on himself'. Similarly, in regard to Lot's plea to save his life in Zoar, Wenham (1994: 58) asserts: 'out of his own mouth Lot proves himself to be fearful, selfish, faithless'. However, a moralistic reading is not appropriate for several reasons. First, the mix of positive and negative elements in Lot's behaviour reveals the inadequacy of those commentaries that wax eloquent with moral condemnations of Lot.200 It does an injustice to the richness of the story to characterise Lot throughout wholly on the basis of the final scene.201

198 Lot responds first to the arrival of the two messengers, next to the men of Sodom, then to the revelation of the messengers and their urging to escape, and finally becomes a pawn in the hands of his daughters, probably in the most literal sense.

199 E.g. Delitzsch (1889: 64): 'The wine and evil lust combine to plunge Lot, not indeed into absolutely passive unconsciousness, but into animal insensibility, in which he surrendered himself without moral consideration to mere blind instinct.'

200 Unqualified condemnations appear in the literature right up to the present e.g Turner (1990b: 95) states that Lot's action is 'nothing less than a wicked act'. It is astonishing to find that Raymond Harari (1989), who opens his study with a quotation from Leibowitz (1972: 122) that acknowledges the subtle way a changed emphasis is conveyed in Tanakh, proceeds to give a treatment of the story.
Secondly, we may not assume that the actions of Lot and his daughters are considered morally reprehensible by the narrator. In Act One, Lot must choose between his duty as host and duty as father. Perhaps the shame of the abuse of his daughters was considered less than the shame of the abuse of his guests. One way or the other, Lot could not avoid shame. The possibility of a positive motive in the initial action and words of Lot cannot be disregarded. In Act Two, Lot is portrayed more as victim than offender, since the story places the responsibility on the shoulders of his daughters and his intoxication to the point that he knew nothing excuses him from culpability. The action of the daughters may be understood as an heroic action, as in Gunkel’s words (1964: 219): ‘When the existence of the race is at stake, the woman is more eager and unscrupulous than the man’. The unashamed naming of their sons to proclaim their actions supports this heroic interpretation. Later Jewish tradition recognised that fornication for a good purpose, such as the

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201 For example, Vawter (1977: 242) generalises from the incest episode in the text with his own theologising: Lot as ‘a man of timid faith, is destined to be mastered by events rather than to master them; Lot now supinely sacrifices the dignity of his person to unholy and forbidden relationships.’

202 Benno Jacob (1974: 125) suggests that Lot calculated the men would refuse the offer of his daughters, but this would make no sense as it would leave Lot back where he began.

203 Jacob (1974: 129) speaks of the deep seated reluctance of the daughters and characterises their motivation not as lust but as fulfillment of destiny. The role of the daughters as tricksters is treated in various articles in Exum (1988). In particular Camp (1988: 15, 22, 30-31) explores the amoral aspect and ambiguity inherent in ritual rites of passage, illustrated also by Ruth, Tamar and Judith. Sacks (1990: 137) quotes a sympathetic interpretation of the daughters’ actions by Origen from the second century CE: ‘If true Christians understood these verses they would not blame the girls so much’. Bellis (1994: 70) notes that the narrator is sympathetic, despite the the negativity of commentators.

204 Against this view, Van Zyl (1960: 5) argues that a writer intending to glorify the mothers would have given them names. This argument from silence does not count against a positive reading of the daughters’ actions. Van Zyl supports his reading of Genesis 19 as a polemic with the observation that Israeliite contempt for Moab was greatest after exile. This comment appears to impose earlier prophetic views on to later Israel and fails to recognise the affirmative elements of
preservation of seed, could be approved.\textsuperscript{205} These considerations further count against reading the incest story as a polemic.

Thirdly, the absence of moral judgement in Genesis 19 suggests the narrator does not intend to moralise.\textsuperscript{206} So Gunkel (1901: 112) asserted in commenting on the story of incest that the ancient pleasure in stories disregarded ethical aspects.\textsuperscript{207} Although the narrative contains some words of explanation of the daughters’ actions these cannot be taken as any kind of moral justification by the story teller but only as a means of developing the story.\textsuperscript{208} This point may be illustrated by the inadequacy of the two reasons that Lot’s elder daughter offers for incest. The supposed lack of other male partners is difficult to reconcile with the existence of Zoar which presumably is not so small as to be totally lacking in virile manhood. That Lot is old and unlikely or unable to preserve his seed, i.e. by marrying again, is countered later in Genesis 25 where Abraham remarries and continues to procreate at an advanced age. The numerous stories in Genesis in which supposed character weaknesses are incorporated into the outworking of divine intention show that the narrators do not intend to rationalise story outcomes in moral terms.

Fourthly, the reading of Genesis 19 above shows that a moralistic reading of Genesis 19 disregards significant ideological elements in the chapter and perpetuates a privileging of the character

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\textsuperscript{205} This is evident in the story of Judah’s incest with his daughter-in-law, Tamar (Genesis 38), which union was equally forbidden in the Torah (Lev 18:15; 20:12). For later examples, see Hershon (1883: 407). Such a reading is not contemplated by Baldwin (1986: 80) who simply asserts that the daughters adopted the standards of Sodom.

\textsuperscript{206} The same is true of the story of Lot’s parting from Abraham and his move to Sodom (Genesis 13). As in Genesis 18 and 19 the judgement is upon Sodom (13:13; 18:20) not on the characters. Wenham (1994: 61) argues that the narrator had no need to condemn the daughters because their action was universally regarded as wrong throughout the ancient Near East, but he does not explain why the narrator does include moral judgements in other parts of the narrative. These include judgements in the mouth of God (19:12f; 20:6f; 21:12; 22:15ff) and in the narrator’s commentary (12:17; 22:1).

\textsuperscript{207} A full treatment of the folklorist aspects of the story is provided by Kliwer (1968).

\textsuperscript{208} Wenham’s comment (1994: 61) that the daughters justified their actions with an exaggeration ignores the intertextual links to the story of Noah, particularly the imagined situation of universal catastrophe, as I elaborate in the next chapter.
Abraham. The narrator does not present Lot in monochrome terms as a contrast to some assumed ideal represented by Abraham but articulates his ideology of mercy drawing upon contrasting elements within the character of Lot alone. To the extent that the story of Lot has an open ending centred upon Moab and Ammon which has significance only in the wider context of Israelite national history, it is not necessary or adequate to interpret it in an isolated way, solely in terms of elements, moral or otherwise, within the story.

A more fruitful account of the moral elements in the story is offered by von Rad (1972: 205) who recognises the moral ambiguity in which Lot is placed when having to choose between his guests and his daughters. Ambiguity also characterises the position of Lot's daughters who can find fulfillment as mothers only by a violation of the usual code of sexual relationships. In his Genesis commentary, Von Rad (366) affirms that 'the narrators of these literary epochs know a great deal about the depths of the human psyche'. Since moral ambiguity is a sine qua non of human life, the narrator may intend to reflect this human reality.

The supposedly moral issues must also be considered in light of the fact that they arise largely within the relationship of Lot and his daughters. This suggests that the narrator intends to comment upon the male-female relationship rather than upon the character of Lot or of the Moabites and Ammonites. Gunn and Fewell (1993: 204) conclude that the characterisation of Lot ridicules maleness as an ultimate value and thus attacks the ideology of patriarchy. Similarly, Boose (1989: 58) finds in Genesis 19 that the role of the daughters and the homosexual theme represent the city influence towards demasculinisation.

*Lot in relation to the divine*

Putting aside a moralistic reading of Lot's story, we still face the major reversal in Lot's dignity between Acts One and Two. Although this is not unexpected within the parameters of a realistic

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209 The perspective of Sternberg (1985: 46) is relevant here, that the key aspect of ideology is not morality but epistemology.

210 A moralistic reading is also rejected by Sternberg (1985: 46), and by Bloom (1986: 8-9) who argues against a moralist interpretation of the ancestral narrative as a whole.

211 This is an element recognised by Turner (1990b:101) but he does not face its implications.

212 Several examples of female-male relationships and patriarchy in the Hebrew Bible are discussed by Laffey (1990: 18), who notes without elaboration that Genesis 19-20 testifies to women’s inferior role as unequal partners in a patriarchal society. Her omission of a fuller treatment of Lot and his daughters is surprising and highlights the presence of a number of biblical stories in which the women have the superior role.
portrait, the question arises whether this reversal is related to the absence of the messengers or any divine initiative in the second act and whether it reflects a variation in Lot's relationship to the divine?

While von Rad rejected a moralistic reading of the daughters' actions in Act Two, he is quite definite about Lot's relationship to the divine. Von Rad (1972: 224) lists the stages of Lot's career as: "Having been set on the way to a promise by YHWH, just as Abraham was (12:4), he turned aside from this way (Genesis 13), still supported by God's grace, and then finally slipped completely from God's hand, which directs history." It is ironic that von Rad should use the language of the hand of God in drawing a conclusion so contrary to the emphasis and language of Act One and his final comment begs the question of what happened to Lot after he fades from the narrative. In the absence of reference to Lot's death, the reader is directed more clearly than usual in Tanakh to the continuation of the Lot story in the accounts of the Moabites and Ammonites. Lot had not in fact slipped completely from the hand that directs history but is represented by the continuing presence of these tribes on the periphery of Israelite history.

Sharon Jeansonne (1988:128) presents a similar account of Lot as a character who increasingly falls from righteous behaviour and observes: 'This is not a man whose character is to be admired'. In her view, this portrayal enables the narrator to present YHWH as a merciful judge, but in such a reading YHWH becomes a quite repugnant God whose divine mercy is dependent on human extremity. The explanation Jeansonne offers does not recognise a distinction between the ideologies of mercy and merit. To link divine mercy solely to the merit of Abraham (Gen 19:29) is to overlook the possibility that Lot's defence of his guests gains merit and creates an obligation.

In their condemnation of Lot, most commentators have ignored the fact that in Genesis 19 the positive status of Lot before the divine is clearly expressed: Lot is a recipient of both revelation (19:13) and deliverance (19:10, 16). In these ways Lot is shown to be still within the compass of divine will and compassion, even though he had parted with Abraham and later settled in Sodom. The same viewpoint is reinforced with great subtlety in the accounts of Lot's interaction with the messengers each of which follows an affirmative pattern. In each scene the tension created between speeches A and B is sustained by a reluctance or delay on the part of the messengers to smooth the way for Lot. They hold back from usurping his initiative and thus give added weight to the manner of resolution of each scene. In Scene One, the messengers test Lot with their refusal of his offer of hospitality, but they accept when he perseveres. In Scene Two, Lot must make himself vulnerable.

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213 It seems unlikely that von Rad's third point could refer to the episode of incest since he has already rejected a moralistic interpretation and in any case it is primarily a story about the daughters, not about Lot. Perhaps von Rad refers to the lack of closure of the story of Lot as an individual.
before the men of Sodom before the messengers act to rescue and punish. Scene Three describes how the compassion of YHWH is activated only after a delay in which Lot is given time to take responsibility himself. As Scene Four opens, Lot appears totally disempowered and dependent, but he has to make a bold plea for an alternative place of refuge before he receives the endorsement of the messengers. These observations show that the ideology of the narrator is quite different from what von Rad and Jeansonne have asserted.

In this connection, the artful literary examination of the ancestral narrative by Harold Bloom seems most relevant. In an analysis of the struggle of Jacob with the 'man' (Gen 32:24-32), Bloom (1986: 8) argues that the narrator uses a form similar to the agon of Greek literature, which denotes the struggle between hero and adversary, or refers to the literary form of debate in which such a struggle is expressed. It seems to me that agon also provides a helpful understanding of the character Lot, especially in Scene Four.214 I find most compelling in three of these scenes the fact that when Lot is put on the spot or left to cope on his own, he rises to the occasion magnificently and then receives the affirmation or protection of the messengers.215 Finally, as in Jacob’s struggle with the ‘man’, Lot obtained ‘victory’ in his agon with the messenger also at daybreak (19:23). The concept of agon applies equally well to the situation of the daughters.

The special status Lot enjoys in relation to the messengers is highlighted by his low status among his family and associates. Through derision, Lot loses face before the men of the city (19:9) and his own sons-in-law (19:14) in Scenes Two and Three. But in Scenes One and Four he gains status through the power he exercises to change the intentions of the divine messengers. While the men of Sodom are undeterred by Lot’s speech and assert that he is no obstacle to their aims (19:9) the messenger declares that he is stymied until Lot reaches Zoar (19:22). This contrast is also expressed ironically in regard to Lot’s knowledge of events. The messengers honour Lot with a revelation of the impending destruction of Sodom, although he plays no part in it, but his daughters use wine to deprive him of knowledge of events in the cave where he plays out his most productive and significant role.

The affirmative treatment of Lot by the messengers can hardly allow us to consider that Lot is unrighteous in their eyes. However, nor is the opposite the case, for the issue of righteousness, that

214 Abraham’s debate with YHWH over justice in Sodom is a further example (Gen 18:23-33).

215 This pattern is not as strong in Scene Three where Lot first responds positively by warning his sons-in-law but then linger in Sodom. One may allow that Lot’s attachment to Sodom could have some altruistic aspect. In any case, the ambivalence encountered in Scene Three represents a realistic rather than idealistic portrayal of Lot.
is so much the concern of commentators, is foreign to the story. Reference to righteousness is entirely absent in the Lot story. Such an absence must be considered significant since it is an explicit theme in several chapters of the ancestral narrative, especially in regard to Abraham. The issue of righteousness is linked only indirectly to the story of Lot through Abraham's dialogue with YHWH (18:23-33) where the question is whether Abraham can find ten righteous in Sodom. The inappropriateness of applying the theme of righteousness to the story becomes apparent in view of the contradiction between the summary treatment of Lot's wife and the gracious treatment of Lot's request by the messenger. Since both characters acted in opposition to divine direction, it is not possible to establish a rational basis for their different treatment in terms of righteousness. These observations lead me to conclude that the narrator of Genesis 19 does not intend us to read the story of Lot in terms of righteousness but in terms of divine favour.

My rejection of readings based upon morality and righteousness opens the way to a reading which takes full account of the intricate connectedness between the two acts. The several significant reversals between the acts set before the reader a realistic portrayal of Lot as an ambivalent figure. Such a reading is essentially synchronic and contrasts with a moralistic reading in which the diachronic factor of cause and effect dominates. Although the events of the narrative present a time sequence in the life of Lot, it is more fruitful to read the changing events alongside each other, such that Lot reflects the character of humanity in dynamic terms as fluid and still in formation. The sustained ambivalence of the character Lot makes inappropriate readings based upon the categories of comedy and tragedy.

The dynamic of the human character is matched by that of the divine, both in the messenger's adaptation to Lot's requests and in the distinct treatment of Lot and his wife by YHWH. The writer

216 When such a reading was introduced before the Christian era, as shown in 2 Peter 2:7-8, the view was strongly on the side of Lot as righteous.


218 Exum (1985: 8) describes the tragic plot as portraying the rise and fall of a character, and the comic, the final triumph of a character over adversity. Davidson (1979: 78) emphasises the former and Coats (1983: 144), the latter. However, Lot never rises far towards heroism and what finally becomes of him is unwritten. Nor does Lot's response to the agon presented by the messengers represent a comic portrayal, although the concluding birth accounts represent a happy ending for the family, if not for Lot as an individual. These observations reflect the wisdom of Landy (1985: 136) that the Bible is ambiguous and resolutions in Genesis are always only partial. The tragic and comic in Lot are, in my view, secondary to the ironic.
does not limit the conception of God's character to the either-or of the category of righteousness but allows for an enigmatic aspect.\textsuperscript{219} The story of Lot certainly points toward the perspective of Bloom (1986: 5) who sees in the ancestral narrative not a God who occasions awe, fear, wonder, much surprise, or even love, but one who is rather agonistic, curious and lively, humorous yet irascible, capable of suddenly violent action.\textsuperscript{220} This God is a character in the work of an author who does not discourse in good and evil, but in blessedness and unblessedness (Bloom: 77).

Bloom's reading is especially relevant to the theme of divine mercy first introduced into Tanakh in Genesis 19. The narrator purposely affirms divine mercy in two ways, once in the commentary (19:16) and once in Lot's testimony (19:19). In this way two complementary aspects are affirmed, first the exercise of compassion or pity which is lenient on the undeserving and second the strongest biblical affirmation of loyalty or loving devotion as to a firm friend. Already we have a unique expression of divine mercy but it is given a superlative character unique in Tanakh by the expanded affirmation, 'you have magnified your loving kindness'.\textsuperscript{221}

4. Summary and conclusion

My analysis of Genesis 19 is based upon the dominant theme of the four major scenes in Act One: the divine affirmation of and presence with Lot in all the complexity of his life. That presence does not operate to diminish his dignity but to challenge and test it. This distinctive ideology in Genesis

\textsuperscript{219} Rogerson (1974: 133) refers to Ricoeur's view that recognition of enigma is necessary to a full analysis of symbolism in literature.

\textsuperscript{220} The distinctiveness and importance of this interpretation may be highlighted by reference to an earlier commentary. At the end of his comments on the story of Genesis 19, Skinner (1910: 312) affirms the religious value of the biblical narrative in terms entirely contrary to those we have considered: 'it has the power to touch the conscience of the world as a terrible example of divine vengeance on heinous wickedness and unnatural lust' and it provides 'another testimony to the unique grandeur of the idea of God in ancient Israel.' Apart from the contradiction most modern readers would see between these two quotations, Skinner now seems wide of the mark. In today's pluralist world it is clear that the story of Sodom has lost any power of this kind it might have had. In any case, as I show in the next chapter, judgement upon Sodom is only a minor concern in Genesis 19 and certainly does not reach the level of divine vengeance. The grandeur of the God of Lot consists in mercy, not in judgement. This mercy has a power quite different to the one contemplated by Skinner.

\textsuperscript{221} The Hiphil form of gadal (to make great) itself appears only this once in the Torah and elsewhere refers frequently to humans exalting the Lord, never to the reverse situation as in Genesis 19.
19 has almost completely escaped recognition by commentators whose readings are largely determined by themes from the story of Abraham. As the compassion and loving kindness of YHWH is of such major significance in both Jewish and Christian concepts of salvation, it is surprising to discover that commentaries make hardly a mention of the mercy theme in regard to Genesis 19, although it is doubly emphasised there.

Of forty-two commentaries or thematic treatments relating to the ancestral narrative in Genesis, about three-quarters offer no theological reflection on the theme of mercy.222 This cursory treatment of a major biblical theme is surprising, especially in the case of those more recent commentators who take a special interest in various other themes in the narrative: Van Seters, Coote & Ord, Sacks, and Moberly. This disinterest, in the case of Van Seters (1975: 216-7) and Westermann (1981:297), calls into question their assertion that destruction and catastrophe is the main theme of the chapter.223

Only six commentators provide any reflection on the link between divine mercy and the story of Lot, as shown in the table below.224 The opposing viewpoints among these six commentaries illustrate the contrasting interpretations of the story of Lot among the commentaries as a whole as to whether Lot was righteous and deserving or not. Von Rad (1972: 220) is the only commentator who acknowledges that the inclusion of Scene Four in Genesis 19 gives the theme of Lot's deliverance a greater theological significance in the chapter than the theme of judgement. My analysis has built


A further six make only brief acknowledgement of the mercy theme found in Gen 19:16 and 19. In particular, Spurrell (1896) and Wenham (1994) merely explain mercy (v.16) as 'sparing' from death and Delitzsch (1888-9), Van Seters (1975), Coats (1983) and Hamilton (1995) quote the texts or Hebrew terms without further comment.

223 For Coote & Ord (1989: 126-131), the mercy theme does not fit the parallels they treat between Genesis 1-11 and 12-25. Moberly (1992a: 84) is preoccupied with his elaboration of the Yahwist religion but at least acknowledges that the story of Lot represents a non-Yahwist religious ethos.

224 Six other commentators refer to pity (v. 16) as a quality of God shown in the messengers but do not relate this in any way to the character, Lot. They are Whitham (1928), Driver (1913), Ryle (1914), Kidner (1967), Maly (1970) and Davidson (1979).
on the same assessment of the chapter, an assessment entirely overlooked by subsequent commentaries. I return to this theme in my final chapter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Comments that refer to Lot.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robertson (1879)</td>
<td>Mercy (v.19) should oblige Lot but he seeks for Zoar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dillmann (1897)</td>
<td>God spared Lot (v.17) as he was a righteous man.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarna (1966)</td>
<td>Contrasts Noah saved as righteous and Lot saved by mercy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldwin (1986)</td>
<td>For Lot's sake the family is spared (v.16).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fretheim (1994)</td>
<td>Notes that hesed signifies undeserved deliverance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significantly, Genesis 19 places Lot on a par with the great heroes of Israel who had similar experiences of the divine. In the previous chapter, I showed that Lot cannot be distinguished in any significant way from Abraham in terms of human characterisation. In relation to the divine, Lot stands alongside Noah as a recipient of a divine revelation of impending destruction. The robust self-assertion of his fourth speech is similar to the speech of Jacob (Gen 32:24). His acknowledgement of divine grace (Gen 19:19) places him in the worthy company of Noah, Moses, Gideon, David and Ezra.225

Most striking is the way the dialogue of Scene Four reflects that of Moses and YHWH which leads to a similar change in divine intention (Exod 33:17). In this dialogue (Exod 33:19, 34:6-7) we also find Lot's acknowledgement of both divine 'grace' and 'loving kindness' which appear together elsewhere only in Gen 19:19 and in the prayer of Ezra 9:8-9. The fact that these texts both represent turning points in the covenant identity of Israel - the gift of the Ten Commandments and the restoration of Israel by Cyrus - lends importance to the affirmation of Lot in this scene.

These observations are matched by the converse point that in particular ways Noah, Moses and David exhibit reversals like that of Lot. They too find divine affirmation where it is lacking from human associates. For some reason the reputations within tradition of Noah, Moses and David have not suffered greatly from the reversals in their stories in the way Lot's reputation has.

225 See respectively Gen 6:8; Exod 33:17, 19; & 34:6-7 and Num 11:11, 15; Judges 6:17; 2 Sam 27:5; Ezra 9:8-9. The literary link between Lot and Gideon is established also by the common element of hospitality offered to a divine messenger and includes the provision of unleavened bread and the questioning attitude of both characters. Such an offer of unleavened bread as an act of hospitality appears elsewhere in Tanakh only once, where the woman of Endor, a medium, treats king Saul (1 Sam 28:24).
My intention is not to substitute my reading in the place of others but to show that a close reading of a biblical text reveals viewpoints that may run counter to the dominant view of the surrounding text. In relation to conventional approaches, my reading moves some way towards the viewpoint of Barthes (1986: 60-61) who rejects the idea of a true interpretation altogether and accepts the ambiguity of alternative readings of the text. For me, this ambiguity does not represent a lack of meaning but rather an increased significance for the text which in its ambiguity represents human life as we experience it. Ambiguity in Genesis 19 also conveys something of the divine mystery.

It seems to me that in the pattern of dialogue and affirmation, in divine deliverance and mercy and in the ironic treatment of Lot and his daughters we see, to use Barthes terms (58), how the text 'is unmade, how it explodes, disseminates - by what coded paths it goes off.' In the wider context of the ancestral narrative, the story of Lot's deliverance takes on a further profound significance since it is already established in Genesis 13 that Lot is the first within the toledot of Terah to be distinguished as outside the covenant between YHWH and Abraham. In Genesis 19, the major explosion (to use Barthes' terminology), occurs in the assertion of divine revelation and deliverance for one outside the covenant of Israel. In this way the story of divine mercy towards Lot has a powerful deconstructive effect over against the dominant ideology that the cult of Israel was limited to the line of Abraham and excluded the likes of Moab and Ammon.226 One commentator who also contemplates such a reading is Gerald Janzen (1993: 67) who compares Lot's drugged state with that of The Man (Adam) in deep sleep at the formation of A Woman (Eve; Gen 2:21-2). Although there are no linguistic connections between these verses and the story of Lot, both relate to the production of new life. So Janzen notes that this story may help Israel appreciate that relations with Moab and Ammon were open to revaluation under a God of providence for all people.

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226 The central idea of deconstructive as used here is the notion that within the narrative itself there are themes and values which run counter to the dominant ideology. See Clines (1990b: 46) and Exum and Clines (1993b: 17).
A Structural Analysis of Genesis 19

Act One
Location: In and around Sodom (19:1-26)
Plot: Sodom is destroyed but Lot and family are delivered.

Scene One
The messengers receive Lot's hospitality (1-3)
Set up Two messengers arrive in Sodom
Lot rises to meet them with a bow
Speeches:
A. Lot invites the messengers to his house;
B. The messengers' initial refusal
A'. Lot presses his invitation (indirect speech)
Actions The messengers accept hospitality
Lot prepares food for them
The messengers eat

Scene Two
The men of Sodom assault Lot's house (4-11)
Set up The men of Sodom surround Lot's house
Speech:
A. The men of Sodom demand to have the messengers
Set up Lot went out at the door and shut it behind him
Speeches:
B. Lot tries to dissuade the men and offers his daughters
A'. The men of Sodom reject this and threaten Lot.
Actions The messengers rescue Lot and blind the men.
The men of Sodom weary themselves at the door

Scene Three
The messengers deliver Lot's family from Sodom (12-16)
Speeches:
A. The messengers warn Lot to flee
B. Lot goes out and urges his sons-in-law to flee
A'. The messengers repeat their warning in the morning
Action The messengers remove Lot and family out of Sodom
Commentary YHWH was merciful to Lot

Scene Four
Lot negotiates escape to Zoar (17-23)
Speeches:
A. A messenger warns Lot to flee to the hills
B. Lot negotiates to go to Zoar instead
A'. The messenger accepts Lot's proposal
Action Lot escapes to Zoar
Commentary Aetiology of the name Zoar

Scene Five
YHWH destroys Sodom and the surrounding region (24-25)
Action YHWH rains brimstone and fire, and overthrows those cities

Scene Six
Lot's wife looks back and dies.

Interlude
Location: The heights above Hebron (19:27-29)
Plot Lot and Sodom are linked to Abraham
Set up Abraham returns to his place before YHWH
Action Abraham surveys the destruction of the Sodom region
Commentary God remembered Abraham and saved Lot.

Act Two
Location: In the cave (19:30-38)
Plot: Lot's two daughters preserve the seed of their father

Scene One
Set up: Lot and daughters leave Zoar for the hills
Speech: The elder announces her plan to the younger
Action They make Lot drunk and the elder lies with him

Scene Two
Speech: The firstborn encourages the younger to copy her.
Action They make Lot drunk and the younger lies with him

Scene Three
Action Two sons are born
Commentary They are the ancestors of the Moabites and Ammonites.
INTERTEXTUAL STUDIES RELATING TO GENESIS 19

In the previous chapter I set forward a reading of Genesis 19 showing that the narrator provides an affirmative picture of the character of Lot in both his human and divine encounters. I also asserted that the narrator intends to affirm the kinship of Israel and her eastern neighbours and that the theme of the destruction of Sodom is largely incidental to this intention. Intertextual studies provide a context in which to test these assertions. The following analyses treat texts in the Hebrew Bible that are thematically linked to the story of Lot. As Beal explains (1992: 28), a particular intertextual reading implies limits upon the endless deferral from text to text contemplated theoretically by Derrida and Barthes, limits determined by the ideology of the reader. My reading of the intertexts elaborates elements of those texts which are in harmony with the reading of the story of Lot I have offered. This is not to say that other intertextual readings may produce different results. With Beal (31), I also allow for a particular diachronic relationship between the intertexts, which I take up more fully in the following chapter.227

I begin with the theme of Sodom, found frequently in the prophets, which is relevant to Act One of Genesis 19. The story of the Levite and the concubine with its account of hospitality under threat (Judges 19) relates especially to Scenes One and Two of Act One, and the story of Noah with its themes of judgement and deliverance (Genesis 6-9) has close links to the rest of Genesis 19. A short treatment of the traditions concerning Zoar bears upon Scene Four. Finally the story of Ruth is relevant to the theme of preserving the seed of Lot found in Act Two.

From the several unique links between Genesis 19 and its intertexts, I argue that the writer of Genesis 19 (apart from the Interlude) has adapted traditions represented by the intertexts and enhanced the themes of concern to him. Most apparent is a change in emphasis from the offences of the corporate entity of Sodom to the affirmation of the individual, and from judgement and destruction to mercy and deliverance. The most creative work of the writer, in Scene Four, alludes to the role of Zoar in the prophets as a place of refuge for Moab and is consistent with the implicit

227 The relationship between intertextuality and tradition history is elaborated by Vorster (1989).
affirmation of Moab (and Ammon) at the close of Genesis 19. My reading stands against the view of Act Two as a polemic against Moab and Ammon.

1. And He overthrew those cities

In his commentary, Westermann (1985a: 297) observes that of all the events in Genesis, the destruction of Sodom (or of Admah and Zeboiim) is the most frequently mentioned in the Hebrew Bible.228 For the purposes of Genesis 19, Sodom is located close to Zoar, south of the Dead Sea, and this fits well the references to bitumen pits in Genesis 14.229 Associated with Sodom are the cities of the plain identified in both Genesis 14 and 19 that may have been dispersed across both the fertile and volcanic regions.230 In any case, the Sodom tradition in Tanakh is more concerned with the nature of the event as divine judgement than with its physical aspects, references to which occupy only a brief part of Genesis 19.

Sodom in the prophetic literature

Beyond Genesis, the Sodom tradition in Tanakh is essentially a prophetic tradition. There are fourteen prophetic references to Sodom, among which I include two in Deuteronomy and one which refers to the cities overthrown without naming them (Jer 20:14). These references fall into two groups: the A tradition concerning the community of Sodom and the B tradition concerning the destruction of Sodom.231 The A and B traditions are quite distinct except for a general allusion to the sin of Sodom included in Lamentations 4:6 in a context which focuses upon the destruction.232 The table below shows the number of texts in each category.

228 Delitzsch (1889: 128) reports that judgement on Sodom is also mentioned in Strabo, Tacitus and Salinus Polyhistor.

229 Summaries of literary, geological and archaeological evidence are provided by historicist commentators such as Delitzsch (1889: 60) and Driver (1913; 202f) and by Howard (1984). However, archaeological explorations for the location of Sodom have been inconclusive. Some evidence points to the fertile area of the lower Jordan which Lot could see from near Bethel (Gen 13:10). The name 'Sodom' is now attached to a ridge near the southwest shore of the Dead Sea, known as Jebel Sdom, but this is no sure guide to the ancient location of Sodom.

230 According to Dahood (1981: 287), the cities of the plain may be mentioned in texts from Ebla.

231 This is a distinction also noted by Loader (1991: 16) and Fields (1991: 36, 40).

232 Although the two elements appear in proximity in Isaiah 1, this is the result of a redaction which brought into association two distinct oracles linked by the occurrence of Sodom as a common catch word.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sodom and Gomorrah</th>
<th>Sodom alone [or cities]</th>
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The majority of the texts link Sodom with Gomorrah, particularly in references to the destruction of the cities.234 Gomorrah never appears without Sodom. Both names occur wherever the oracles are directed to other nations, such as Edom and Babylon. Where Sodom appears alone, the oracles refer only to Judah but several 'Sodom and Gomorrah' texts are also directed towards Judah alone. Neighbouring cities are added in Jer 49:18 and 50:40. Perhaps two of these were Admah and Zeboiim (Deut 29:23) representing a northern tradition found earlier in Hos 11:8. This variety of combinations suggests the number and names of the cities destroyed is incidental, especially to the B tradition in which the physical calamity is the main feature.235 On the other hand, the A tradition depends upon identifying the communities of Sodom and Gomorrah in particular for comparison with Judah.

The table shows that there are five prophetic texts that fall within the A tradition. Most often Sodom and Gomorrah represent Judah as a nation under judgement within her relationship to YHWH. Isaiah first derides the leaders of Judah calling them 'you rulers of Sodom', then the people: 'you people of Gomorrah' (Isa 1:10-23). Later he complains of the leaders: 'they display their sin like Sodom' (Isa 3:9). Similarly, Jeremiah says of the prophets of Jerusalem: 'all of them have become to me like Sodom and her inhabitants like Gomorrah' (Jer 23:14). The Song of Moses (Deut 32:32) is a prophetic condemnation of Judah, not unlike that of Jeremiah 23, and describes the enemies of Israel as corrupt like Sodom and Gomorrah. The comparison in Ezekiel portrays Judah, Samaria and Sodom as sisters, all of whom are condemned, among whom Judah was the most wicked. A comparison with Sodom is also applied to Babylon (Isa 13:19; Jer 50:40) to Moab and Ammon (Zeph 2:9) and to Edom (Jer 49:18).

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233 In Ezek 16:53, 55 the fate of Sodom is described as 'their captivity', referring to people deported rather than destroyed. This introduces a tradition quite distinct from that of the physical destruction of Genesis 19.

234 The traditional link between Sodom and Gomorrah is evident in Gen 10:19, 13:10, and 18:20, and especially in Gen 14:10 where the narrative context concerns five cities in all, and in 19:24, 28 where the context concerns only Sodom.

235 These various combinations are analysed by Schaub (1982: 17-20). They also include Sodom and her daughters (Ezek 16:55).
The A tradition texts are concerned more with the variety of offences of Judah than those of Sodom. Isaiah and Jeremiah condemn the leaders, the prophets and the people for corruption in social and religious life, with reference to eleven specific offences. The offences of Sodom are mentioned only in two places (Isa 3:9: ḫəṭəʼ, 'sin'; Ezek 16:49: ᵐᵉⁿᵃⁿ, 'iniquity') and specified only in Ezekiel. Three of these are pride in their abundance of food, idle leisure, and their lack of help for the poor (Ezek 16:49). The fourth accusation is that the people of Sodom committed abomination before YHWH (16:47, 50). The term 'abomination', (טַוְרָעָה) is most frequent in Ezekiel, where it appears 42 times, and covers a wide variety of offences held to be disgusting to YHWH, such as prostitution, adultery, murder, child sacrifice, cheating, betrayal, extortion and lawlessness.²³⁶ Ezekiel also describes sexual relations between close relatives as an abomination but, unlike the Holiness Code (Lev 18:22; 20:13), nowhere does he encompass homosexuality under this category. The prophetic texts do not acknowledge homosexuality as an offence of Sodom. Indeed, there seems to be a total lack of reference to homosexuality anywhere in the prophets. Equally there is no reference to Sodom anywhere in the Levitical law.

The physical destruction of Sodom, tradition B, is recalled by the prophets in ten instances, including Jer 20:14, in order to warn others of a similar fate. The B tradition, unlike A, has a consistent expression in the prophetic literature through the use of the verb or noun 'overthrow' (from the root, ḥaqeq). The noun form (mobekah) is characteristic of the 'Sodom and Gomorrah' texts, excepting Zephaniah, and does not appear elsewhere in Tanakh. The verb form appears in the 'Sodom alone' texts and also in Amos and Deuteronomy 29, i.e. in texts from all periods.²³⁷ The consistent use of the noun form indicates that an ancient cataclysmic event encompassing Sodom and Gomorrah attained a set proverbial character in the history of the tradition. In the course of this development, the event also became a metaphor for judgement and the physical details became unimportant.²³⁸ Against the established pattern of the other prophets, Ezekiel makes no mention of the destruction of Sodom and never uses the term 'overthrow'. Instead he speaks of the captivity of

²³⁶ Abomination is also a common term in Deuteronomy, where mostly it refers to the worship of idols and the consequent ritual defilement of the temple and religion in general.

²³⁷ In Amos and Deuteronomy, both noun and verb forms appear. In place of the root, ḥaqeq, in Zephaniah we find reference to Sodom as 'a perpetual desolation', using the language of Isa 1:7, also typical of both Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

²³⁸ The word ḥaqeq could assume a figurative sense, including the notions 'to convert' and 'to pervert'. The threat of being overturned matches the prophetic call for Israel to 'turn again' in loyalty to Yahweh.
Sodom alongside that of Judah and Israel and extends the parallel into a future time when all three sisters will be restored (16:53).\textsuperscript{239}

The above analysis shows that the prophetic tradition regarding Sodom is most strongly established in terms of the metaphor of destruction and suggests that references to the offences of the community of Sodom are secondary. The oldest tradition concerns the destruction of several cities of the plain, notably Sodom and Gomorrah.\textsuperscript{240} The proverbial strength of this tradition was subsequently used by the prophets of Israel to warn Judah of the consequences of disloyalty to YHWH. Those texts which refer to Sodom alone reflect the post-exilic focus on one city, Sodom, as representative of one nation, Judah, and a change in emphasis from the destruction towards the offences of Sodom. I now investigate the Genesis accounts of Sodom to discover how traditions A and B are presented there, whether the prophetic language is used, and the linkage between Sodom and Gomorrah.

\textit{The Sodom traditions of Genesis}

The Genesis traditions of Sodom encompass a greater variability than the prophetic traditions. They refer not only to the community and to the destruction but also to the location and to the king of Sodom. Contrary to some commentators, I believe the view of Sodom in Genesis 14 is rather on the affirmative side.\textsuperscript{241} In Genesis 18-19, along with the several references to Sodom alone and with Gomorrah, we find that Sodom is often referred to as 'the city' or 'this place' or by a pronoun: it, them or there. Several verses contain more than one reference to the city. The accompanying chart sets out these references. There are four references in parentheses which indicate where the name

\textsuperscript{239} The same theme embraces the Dead Sea region in Ezekiel 47:6-12. Restoration is also proclaimed for Moab and Ammon (Jer 48:47; 49:6) and for Elam (Jer 49:39) and Egypt (Ezek 29:14).

\textsuperscript{240} Rast (1987) comes to the same conclusion in his examination of the core of the Sodom tradition in Tanakh.

\textsuperscript{241} Leibowitz (1981: 132) notes how the weaving together of stories about the king of Sodom and the king of Salem provides a contrast between the gifts of food and drink brought by the latter and the empty hands of the former. However, while this reading is consistent with the lack of hospitality of Sodom in Genesis 19, it hardly fits the story since the king of Sodom has been dispossessed and has nothing to offer other than the booty Abraham has reclaimed, which surely represents a most generous offer (14:21). Given Abraham's helpful treatment of Sodom, and the king's offer, the view of Benno Jacob that the entire chapter constitutes a polemic against Sodom is unwarranted.
Sodom seems to be an elaboration of an existing text. The lack of identification of the city of Sodom in Genesis 18 and 19 is marked. References to the city or the place dominate (in sixteen verses) and Sodom is named only six times out of thirty-one references in these two chapters. This raises the question whether the naming of the city of Genesis 19 is a secondary feature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genesis</th>
<th>Sodom and Gomorrah</th>
<th>City, place or pronoun</th>
<th>Sodom alone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>2. 10:19</td>
<td>2. (13:12)</td>
<td>4. (14:12), 18:16, 22; 19:1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14:11</td>
<td>19:16</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>King(s)</td>
<td>3. 14:2, 8, 10.</td>
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<td>3. 14:17, 21, 22.</td>
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In each of Genesis 13, 14, 18 and 19 there is a movement towards a focus on Sodom in particular, among the two or more cities in view. This is clear in 13:10, 12 and 13 and in the first and last episodes of Genesis 14, especially in the transition from 14:11 to 14:12. Not only is the mention of Sodom an elaboration in the latter verse but the whole verse appears to be an adaptation of the preceding verse.

In chapter eighteen, Sodom appears alone only to point to the setting of Genesis 19 but is otherwise not distinguished from Gomorrah (18:20). The other references in Genesis 18 show that the name of the city was largely incidental to the dialogue, especially the lack of identification in 18:21 and 24. The name 'Sodom' in 18:26 appears to be an elaboration because it is redundant and because Abraham first refers to the city without reference to Sodom (18:24). The subtle adaptation of existing tradition in readiness for Genesis 19 is apparent in the transition within the soliloquy from 'the cry (שָׁאוֹעָה) of Sodom and Gomorrah' (plural; 18:20) to 'the cry (שָׁאוֹעָה) of her' (singular; 18:21). The latter Hebrew term for cry reappears in 19:13 where also we find both the singular number ('this place', 'it') and the absence of a place name.

The evidence of Genesis 19 is especially compelling as the identification of Sodom is totally absent from Scenes Three and Four and appears only as an elaboration in Scene Two. References in 19:1, 24 and 28 serve to provide a concrete setting for the story of Lot which is incidental to the story of

242 In 13:12, 18:26 and 19:4 the name of Sodom stands in addition to reference to 'the city'. In 14:12, the Hebrew word order suggests an elaboration: 'And they took Lot and his goods, the son of Abraham's brother, and departed, and he dwelt in Sodom'.

243 This initial lack of identification of Sodom leaves the reader guessing somewhat since there is no report that YHWH has decided to destroy Sodom, nor that Abraham has learnt about such a plan.
his encounters there. Indeed, a comparison of vv. 24 and 28 with 25 and 29 suggests that even the story of the overthrow of cities existed without any reference to Sodom or Gomorrah. In the light of these observations, I conclude that the stories of Sodom in particular have been set into an existing tradition in which Sodom and Gomorrah were not distinguished. Furthermore, the name of Sodom was not originally essential to the story of Lot and the messengers in Genesis 19. The adaptation of tradition in 18:21 to conform to 19:13, where Sodom is unnamed, suggests that the latter verse and its features represent the earliest form of the destruction tradition in Genesis 19.

The minimal reference to Sodom in Genesis 19 is entirely consistent with the absence of any reference to Lot in the prophetic traditions about Sodom. Sodom is likewise never linked to Abraham in the prophets. These observations suggest that prior to the incorporation of Lot into the Sodom tradition, there was a story of destruction which referred consistently to 'the cities of the plain' and became particularised around the two cities, Sodom and Gomorrah. This destruction was a response to the cry of Sodom (19:13) which had reached God (Gen 18:21) before the visit of the messengers to Sodom.

The above analysis provides a context for considering the relative place of the traditions about the community and the destruction of Sodom which appear in proximity in Genesis. The original two city tradition in most texts refers to the B tradition of destruction. The reference in 18:20 to the cry of the two cities, in the A tradition, is the one exception and may be understood as an intermediate form of the tradition, although the different Hebrew terms for 'cry' (18:20, 21) are hard to explain. In Genesis 13, the change in focus from two cities to Sodom in particular corresponds to a change in interest from tradition B to A (13:10, 13). While Genesis 14 describes Sodom and Gomorrah and other cities under attack, it contains no reference to the destruction of Sodom, nor is the community of Sodom characterised directly. A focus upon the A tradition dominates in Genesis 18, although the dialogue interweaves the theme of destruction and references to the righteous in the city. The pending destruction is important in Genesis 19, but only in Scenes 3 and 5 and in the Interlude. The total lack of reference to the destruction theme in relation to Sodom alone is marked. Where the A and B traditions are most closely linked in the words of the messengers (19:13, 15), Sodom is not named.

The prophetic tradition regarding Sodom is reflected in Genesis but with considerable adaptation. The divine perspective on Sodom ('before YHWH'; Ezek 16:50) is fundamental throughout the story of Lot, regarding both the community and the destruction (13:10, 13; 18:20-21; 19:13, 24-25). To a limited degree, the language of the prophets is found in the Genesis account in both the A and B traditions but in both cases distinctive language dominates.

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244 This includes the stories of the encounter between Abraham and the king of Sodom (Gen 14:17; 21-24) and the dialogue between Abraham and YHWH about Sodom (18:23-32).
Within Genesis, the physical destruction of Sodom is described most frequently not in terms of overthrow but using the common verb zabat ('to lay waste', Piel: Gen 13:10; 19:13 & 29; Hiphil: 18:28, 31, 32, as also in 19:13 & 14), a total of nine occurrences.\(^{245}\) Once again the specific nature of the destruction is described only in the narrative (19:24-25) where we find first the notion of volcanic inundation from above which seems to contrast with the seismic upheaval from below implied by the term overthrow. The two aspects of the destruction are represented again in Gen 19:29 which is the only verse among the Sodom traditions in Genesis which contains both the language of 'lay waste' and of 'overthrow'. In both vv. 24-5 and 29 we find the verb form of the prophetic term 'overthrow' already foreshadowed in 19:21, which is quite common in Tanakh. However, the noun form (maphekah), which dominates the prophetic tradition of destruction, is absent from Genesis. In its place we find in 19:29 the unique form hapakah. These observations suggest that the B tradition in Genesis is more developed than that of the prophets.

Descriptions in Genesis of the community of Sodom are noticeably superlative in nature. These include 'very wicked' (razah\(^{2}\)) and 'great sinners' (haffar\(^{2}\)) in 13:13 and 'the cry (sevagah) ... is great' and 'grievous sin' (haffar\(^{2}\)) in 18:20. I noted above the different term, 'cry' (sevagah) in 18:21 and 19:13.\(^{246}\) Lastly, reference is made to the 'iniquity' (zavon) of the city (19:15). Such superlative descriptions and references to the cry of Sodom do not appear in the prophetic references to Sodom. The three references to 'cry' denote oppression on an earthly plane. This is consistent with the motive of power, rather than personal indulgence, which lies behind the account of inhospitality and homosexual assault in Genesis 19. Links between the prophetic and Genesis traditions are evident only in the terms 'sin' (Isa 3:9; Lam 4:6) and 'iniquity' (Ezek 16:49; Lam 4:6) which are quite general and do not distinguish between religious and moral offences.\(^{247}\) These terms are not common in Genesis but appear throughout Tanakh, especially in the major prophets, which may indicate prophetic influence in Genesis 19.

\(^{245}\) We also find sagah ('to perish'; 18:23, 24; 19:15 & 17) which is a rare verb appearing only fourteen times in Tanakh but here pertains to the people of Sodom rather than to the physical environment. The same is true of the common root mut ('to put to death', Hiphil: 18:25). These two terms also appear in proximity to the reference to Sodom in Deut 32:23 & 39.

\(^{246}\) The feminine form: 'cry of her' in 18:21 gave rise to the midrash of Pirke DeRabbi Eliezer, 25 which imagines Lot's daughter crying out because she was committed to be burnt for disregarding the prohibition in Sodom against feeding the poor. This midrash portrays inhospitality as the sin of Sodom. See Ginzberg (1937: 249)

\(^{247}\) E.g. 'sin before Yahweh' can refer to fornication (Gen 20:6; 39:9) or to idolatry (Exod. 23:33; Deut. 20:18).
Summary

Both the prophetic and the Genesis traditions about Sodom indicate that in the earliest form, Sodom was not distinguished from Gomorrah and the B tradition of destruction was primary. It is possible that a secular tradition about the destruction of several cities, including Sodom and Gomorrah, took on religious significance and became a vehicle for oracles directed towards Judah and other nations. For this purpose Sodom provided the particularity needed for the comparisons made by the prophets. The destruction tradition that dominates the prophetic texts has a secondary role in Genesis 19 where the offences of the men of the city are in focus, especially in Scene Two.

In the B tradition, the language of the prophetic texts and of Genesis 19 differs considerably. While the language of 'overthrow' dominates the prophetic references, 'lay waste' is preferred in Genesis but is never used of Sodom in the prophets. Similarly, the forms of destruction threatening Judah found in the prophetic oracles bear no relation to those in Genesis 19. Isaiah forecasts that they will be devoured by the sword (1:20; 3:25) while Jeremiah envisions disaster, shame and disgrace (23:12, 40). Among the prophetic texts, Deut 29:23 bears the closest relation to Genesis 19:24-5 in the way that it presents destruction from above and below.

As to the A tradition, there is no apparent link between the prophetic and Genesis traditions. Sodom appears throughout Tanakh as a notorious example of 'sin' and 'iniquity' but references to her offences are vague, except in Ezek 16:49 and Genesis 19. There is only a tenuous link between these references in terms of oppression, and homosexuality features only in Genesis. Meanwhile, the prophetic condemnations of Judah as 'like Sodom' identify Judah's offences but do not indicate whether these were also offences of Sodom. These include oppression and legal corruption (Isa 1:17, 23) and despotic and misleading leadership and financial cheating (Isa 3:2, 3, 12).

The question of the relationship between the prophetic and the Genesis traditions about Sodom is not easy to determine. Both develop from the common story of catastrophe and both see the work of YHWH behind it. The few common linguistic elements reveal some original connection but the distinctions between the traditions indicate considerable secondary development in different directions. Within the prophetic tradition, the link in Deut 29:23 between Sodom and Gomorrah, and Admah and Zeboiim, also found in Genesis 10 and 14, apparently represents the most

248 Here I differ with Loader (1991, 16) who asserts that the prophetic traditions about the sins of Sodom are as consistent with Genesis 19 as the traditions about the destruction of Sodom.
developed version of the B tradition, from the viewpoint of exile. The two-fold destruction of Gen 19:24-25, where only Sodom and Gomorrah are mentioned, appears to have arisen prior to the tradition of Deut 29:23 but later than the standard prophetic tradition and is therefore probably also post-exilic.

Ezekiel's notion of Sodom and Samaria as sisters shows the potential diversity of developing traditions about Sodom. This notion is not in harmony with that of Genesis and the more historical books to the extent that Sodom was no longer functioning when Samaria was founded. The same is true of the captivity and restoration of Sodom envisaged in Ezekiel. In my view, both Genesis and Ezekiel represent specific post-exilic elaborations beyond the standard and limited scope of the prophetic tradition of Sodom. However, they share some significant common features, not least the change in focus from destruction to community which is consistent with a post-exilic setting. Equally significant is the inclusive view of both Genesis 19 and Ezekiel 16 which contrasts with the exclusive conception of the people of God found elsewhere in Tanakh. Ezekiel opens up the thought that judgement on Sodom, as on Judah, is not to be considered absolute and final. The narrator of Genesis 19 uses the Sodom tradition in a different way to provide a similar perspective where Lot represents redemption for those outside the covenant.

It is appropriate to recognise that in the elaborated traditions of Genesis and Ezekiel, Sodom has taken on a figurative and ideological significance far removed from the historical particulars of physical catastrophe, whatever they may have been. To some degree, the absence from both the prophets and Genesis of any specific characterisation of the physical meaning of 'overthrow' (as distinct from the volcanic inundation) directs the readers attention to a symbolic understanding.

There are several indications that Deuteronomy 29 is the beginning of a distinct and late portion of the book from the post-exilic period. Deut 29:1 clearly distinguishes the covenant in the land of Moab from that of Horeb. The writer prefers the phrase 'land of Moab' rather than 'plains of Moab' as found consistently in Numbers 22-36. Von Rad (1966: 180) notes the reference to the written law in 29:20-21, which seems to refer to the main body of Deuteronomy. The Hebrew term for curse in Deuteronomy 29, zelah, is different from the root zar used in Deut 27-28 and in Gen 12:3; 27:29 and Num 24:9. The covenant in the land of Moab is closely linked to the introductory chapters of Deuteronomy where it is already foreshadowed in Deut 1:5-6. Both sections reveal a concern with life beyond the Babylonian exile (4:26-30; 29:28; 30:1, 4), although this is melded in with the ostensible setting prior to Joshua's entry into Canaan (30:18). The turning point may be identified in Deut 28:45, 49 where curse, judgement and exile is no longer merely a prospect conditional upon disobedience but rather an assured reality because of disobedience.

A unique use of the figurative significance of 'overthrow' is found in Hosca 11:8, which refers only indirectly to Sodom but uses the verb, hagak (Niphal), to refer to YHWH turning his heart.
In his discussion of the root, ḫakāḵ, Rast (1987: 191) notes that it was part of the treaty language of curse, giving two examples. Deut 29:23 provides a clear example of this usage, where the reference to Sodom belongs to the threat of curse on those who break the covenant. The overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah is taken as a metaphor for the devastation of Israel's exile into captivity. In this respect it comes close to the viewpoint of Ezekiel 16. This usage is not unlike that of the prophets where a demise like that of Sodom is presented as a threat to Judah. To understand Sodom in Genesis 19 as accursed is to recognise the deliverance of Lot and his family as blessing.

2. **Hospitality under attack.**

From the somewhat anarchic period of early Israelite settlement in Canaan come two accounts which help to interpret Genesis 19.

*Lot and Sodom, Rahab and Jericho*

The conversation between Genesis 19 and the story of Rahab (Josh 2; 6:15-25) has been explored by Hawk (1992) whose analysis mostly focuses upon reversals between the two stories. For our purposes it is significant that both are stories of escape of a family outside of Israel, both involve negotiation (Josh 2:9-14) and both acknowledge mercy (*ḥesed*, Josh 2:12, 14). Like Lot, Rahab offers hospitality but is later delivered by her guests. Rahab describes the *ḥesed* of the spies as the return of one loyalty for another, referring to the hospitality and protection she had provided. Although Lot does not bargain in the same way, the *ḥesed* of the messengers is now seen to be not unmerited favour but a quid pro quo in loyalty for his attempt to protect them at his door. The deliverance of Rahab constitutes a variation of the total destruction (*ḥerem*) pronounced on the city, which suggests that the destruction of Sodom may be viewed in these terms. The fact that the likely sexual element of Rahab's lodging house does not disqualify her, speaks against a moralistic reading of Genesis 19. As Hawk (96) acknowledges, the association of these stories elicits a significant challenge to exclusive notions of salvation.

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Loader, (1991: 11) suggests this is a deliberate word play to suggest that God suffers the fate of Sodom in place of Israel, and notes that this is a positive application of the Sodom tradition.

Rast refers to the sarcophagus of Ahiram and to a text from Sifer.

Newman (1985: 174) goes some distance towards the same view, describing the story of Rahab as a type of 'security clearance' legend, reminding the possibly overzealous YHWH worshippers of the Israelites debt to her clan.
Lot and Sodom, the Old Man and Gibeah

Much closer to the story of Genesis 19 are elements of the traditions of the Benjamite tribe preserved in Judges 19-21, the closing three chapters of the book. These traditions reflect relations between the tribes of Israel, beginning on the domestic level of a Levite from Ephraim and his concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. Near the beginning of the drama are two scenes with close parallels in both plot and language to the first two scenes of Genesis 19 (Judg 19:14-25). The introduction prior to these scenes tells how the concubine had deserted the Levite, whereupon he travelled to her father's home to persuade her to come back to him. The Levite is delayed two days by the father but finally departs with his concubine and servant late in the day. They soon come to Jebus (Jerusalem) but the Levite would not turn in to 'the city of a stranger' and chooses to journey on into Israelite territory, where they find hospitality in Gibeah (19:1-13). The ensuing story unfolds according to the two scenes set out in parallel below with the Genesis story. Differences between the two stories enable us to consider the relationship between them and the distinct intentions of the writers.

The text in the tables below follows the NRSV, except where a change is necessary to show, in bold type, where exactly the same Hebrew roots appear in both stories. Underlining shows other close parallel elements of setting or plot where different language appears. The opening scenes exhibit twelve parallels, including six cases of identical terminology.253 In addition, the dialogue between host and guests in Judges 19 follows the ABA' pattern I identified earlier in Genesis 19 but does not encompass an opposition (compare Gen 19:2a, 2b, 3a and Judg 19:17b, 18-19, 20). In Judges, the offer of hospitality is made in A' and is accepted immediately. Reference to the public square is found elsewhere in the Torah only in Deut 13:16, and next in 2 Sam 21:12.

The parallels set out below show that hospitality is emphasised in both stories as an alternative to lodging in a public space. However, major differences appear in the way hospitality is highlighted in the two stories. In Genesis we find a positive emphasis in Lot's repeated, pressing invitation as host. However, in Judges we find the lengthy speech of the Levite as guest and the repeated, negative reference to the absence of hospitality, first from the narrator and then from the Levite (Judg 19:15, 18).

253 The verb 'to stay the night' in Gen 19:2 is the same as that in Judg 19:15 but a different term appears in Judg 19:20
### Scene One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genesis 19:1-3</th>
<th>Judges 19:14-21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a And there came two angels to Sodom in the evening;</td>
<td>14 So they passed on and went their way; and the sun went down on them near Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(See v. 2b) (The need for hospitality)</td>
<td>15 They turned aside there, to go in and spend the night at Gibeah. He went in and sat down in in the open square of the city; but no one took them in to spend the night.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom.</td>
<td>16 Then at evening there was an old man coming from his work in the field. The man was from the hill country of Ephraim; and he sojourned in Gibeah. (The people of the place were Benjaminites).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9 This man came in to sojourn.)</td>
<td>17 When the old man looked up and saw the wayfarer in the open square of the city; he said, 'Where are you going and where do you come from?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them; and bowed down with his face to the ground;</td>
<td>18 He answered him, 'We are passing from Bethlehem in Judah to the remote parts of the hill country of Ephraim, from which I come. I went to Bethlehem in Judah; and I am going to my home. Nobody has offered to take me in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19 We your servants have straw and fodder for our donkeys, with bread and wine for me and the woman and the young man along with us. We need nothing more'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 He said, 'Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant's house, and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you can rise early and go on your way'. They said, 'No; we will spend the night in the square'.</td>
<td>20 The old man said, 'Peace be to you. I will care for all your wants; only do not spend the night in the square'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 But he urged them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.</td>
<td>21 So he brought him into his house, and fed the donkeys; they washed their feet, and ate and drank.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An even closer correspondence exists between the second scenes of the two stories, which exhibit fifteen parallel phrases, including seven phrases with identical terminology. Moreover, within the seven identical phrases there are as many as twenty-three corresponding terms, compared to eight in the earlier scenes. The verb 'to surround' is very common throughout Tanakh but refers to a house only in the two texts below. The speech of the host in Judges 19:23-24 is almost identical to that of Lot but also includes references to the proposal of the men as 'this foolish thing' and 'such a vile thing'. In both scenes the crisis is finally resolved by action of the guests (Gen 19:11a; Judg 19:25b). Although the men of the city verbally reject the plea of the host in both cases, in Judges
they accept the concubine in place of the Levite and abuse her to death. Only by this means does the host's daughter remain unharmed, like the daughters of Lot.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Genesis 19:4-11</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 and they called to Lot, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may know them'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Lot went out of the door to them, shut the door after him,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 and said, 'I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. (See v. 8b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 See, I have two daughters who have not known a man; let me bring them out to you, and do what you like with them, only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 But they replied, 'Stand back.' And they said, 'This fellow came here to sojourn, and he would play the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them.' Then they pressed hard upon the man Lot, and came near the door to break it down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 But the men inside reached out their hand, and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 And they struck with blindness the men who were at the door of the house, both small and great, so that they were unable to find the door.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Judges 19:22-25** |
| 22 While they were enjoying themselves, the men of the city, a perverse lot, surrounded the house, and started pounding on the door. |
| 23 And the man, the master of the house, went out to them |
| and said to them, 'No, my brothers, do not act so wickedly, I beg you. Since this man is my guest, do not do such a vile thing. |
| 24 See my virgin daughter and his concubine; let me bring them out now. Ravish them and do what you like with them but don't do such a vile thing to this man.' |
| 25 But the men would not listen to him, |

so the man seized his concubine, and brought her out to them. They wantonly raped her, and abused her all through the night until the morning. And as the dawn began to break, they let her go.

The ensuing events in Gibeah constitute a lengthy and wide ranging narrative in which all the tribes of Israel are embroiled. Further parallels occur between the demise of Gibeah and that of Sodom. There is total destruction through fire, which is attributed to YHWH (Judg 20:18, 23, 26-28), although in Judges it was achieved by human agency (Gen 19:24; Judg 19:35, 40).\textsuperscript{254} The escape of a few Benjamites into open country parallels the escape of Lot and his daughters from Sodom.

\textsuperscript{254} The language of Gen 19 appears in the terms 'destroy' (Judg 20:21, 35, 42) and 'smote' (Gen 19; 11; Judg 20:31, 37, 39, 49).
(20:44-48, 21:13-14). The final chapter of Judges concerns the preservation of the tribe of Benjamin within Israel, of whom only six hundred remained out of eighteen thousand. In this case the men lack wives whereas in Genesis 19 the daughters of Lot lack husbands (Judges 21:1-3). Here also exceptional steps are taken to kidnap the women of Jabesh-Gilead and then of Shiloh according to a morality determined by corporate ideological considerations.

Literary and ideological differences

Given the many close parallels, it is through the differences between the stories that we may assess the intentions of the narrator and the possible dependence of one story upon the other. Gunkel thought the Judges passage might be an imitation of the Genesis passage but my analysis, like von Rad’s, leans in the opposite direction. Points of difference between the stories are evidence of the greater literary development of the Genesis story and of its more developed ideology.²⁵⁵

Regarding the literary evidence, the story of Genesis 19 is concise and its action and speeches are tightly structured, while the narrative of Judges 19-21 is flowing and verbose, including a long introduction of fifteen verses, an explanation of the stranger’s journey, and an extended outline of the hospitality the old man offers. Since the parallel elements within the stories account for almost the entire plot of Scenes 1 and 2 in Genesis 19, it appears that these scenes have been created by selecting the material from a source like Judges 19.²⁵⁶ The oral history of the latter narrative seems close to the surface while a specific literary construction shows in the story of Genesis 19.²⁵⁷

The relatively later development of the story of Genesis 19 is further indicated by a comparison of Judg 19:22 and Gen 19:4. In the latter verse the added reference to ‘the men of Sodom’ is a sign that the story has been adapted to its new context. The hyperbole whereby all the men of Sodom are involved in the assault moves beyond the realism of the small, worthless mob described in Judges 19 where all Gibeah is held accountable for the mob’s behaviour without the need to accuse all the citizens directly.

As to the sexual element, the stories differ in that the host of Judges includes the extra inducement to the mob in Gibeah, to humble the women (Judg 19:24), and in the mob’s acceptance of the

²⁵⁵ My conclusions are opposite to those of Leygraaf (1993) who sees the Israelites in Judges portrayed as like the men of Sodom.

²⁵⁶ Niditch (1982: 376) is confident that Judges 19 does not derive from Genesis 19 and, on account of its relative complexity, leans to the view that the Judges story is primary. However, this study shows that her assertion that the theological message of Genesis 19 pales in contrast to the many messages of Judges 19-20 is premature.

²⁵⁷ Here I follow Culley (1976: 118) in his approach to the structure of Hebrew narrative.
concubine in place of the Levite.\textsuperscript{258} Both of these items are consistent with the interpretation of the assault in terms of power rather than morality.\textsuperscript{259} Along these lines, Stone (1995: 100) further explains that the men of Gibeah were satisfied to have just the concubine and not the daughter of the house because they intended to shame not the host but only the Levite. The different response of the men of Sodom shows that they intended to humble Lot. For this purpose, the homosexual aspect is a secondary element in both stories.

The particular concerns of the writer of Genesis 19 are indicated by differences between the stories of Genesis and Judges. First note that the crises that the Levite faces as visitor become, in Genesis, the concern of the host, Lot. At the beginning, the Levite's concern to find hospitality and to show he will be no trouble (Judg 19:19) contrasts with Lot's concern to offer it. The endangerment of the daughter of the Levite is matched by that of Lot's daughters. A transition now occurs back to a parallel between the Levite and the messengers. As Lot now depends upon his guests for deliverance, so also the resolution of conflict in Judges 19 depends upon the action of the Levite, as guest, who sacrifices his concubine to the men. Lot is brought in to safety while the concubine is brought out to destruction. The different outcome of the assault in Genesis 19 provides an opening for the first story of the deliverance of Lot and ensures that the daughters survive for the purposes of Act Two.

The change of role for Lot is portrayed in the description of Lot as sojourner and in his dependence upon his guests. He is now identified with the Levite as a person in need. The two intertexts thus reflect the uniquely Deuteronomic concern that special care be shown to Levites, sojourners, orphans and widows, all of whom are welcome to be incorporated into Israel.\textsuperscript{260} As a result of the role change, Lot, functions on both sides of this torah observance regarding hospitality for the stranger. Through Scenes Three and Four, Lot as a beneficiary of care and mercy dominates over Lot as benefactor.

The characterisation of Lot is especially advanced by the ABA' pattern that I identified in the previous chapter. Through this pattern, which is not apparent in Judges 19, the writer introduces and sustains the agonistic aspect of Lot's encounter with the messengers. Crises unique to the Genesis story appear when the messengers decline Lot's initial offer of hospitality and when the men

\textsuperscript{258} The same common Hebrew term 'to humble' is used with a sexual connotation in Gen 34:2; Deut 21:14; 22:24, 29; 2 Sam 13:12-32; Lam 5:11; and Ezekiel 22.

\textsuperscript{259} Penchansky (1992: 83) provides a feminist critique of the Judges story in which he sees a condemnation of the male social structure. Against this background, the ironic reversal in Genesis 19 in favour of the daughters stands out.

of Sodom reject the virgins they are offered. In Judges 19, the actual rather than merely threatened abuse of the concubine is the crux of tension essential to the developing story of the Benjamites and other tribes in the following chapters. However, the rejection of Lot's offer of his daughters brings that story to a different crisis that presents Lot as a person who has to be rescued. This is not the case with regard to the host of Judges 19. In this way, Scene Two of Genesis 19 is important for reasons not of plot but of characterisation. Events at Lot's house are incidental to the ongoing story of Genesis 19, which might well have moved directly from verse three to twelve without the reader missing anything.

A second distinguishing feature of Genesis 19 is the interaction of the divine with an individual person. From the outset, the story of Lot is predicated upon a divine initiative of revelation, deliverance and destruction through the messengers. Divine words here legitimate individual action. The story of Judges 19-21, however, originates on the human plane and incorporates the divine, including words of legitimation (the oracles), only when it reaches the level of tribal relationships. This plot element is perfectly adapted to the distinct ideology of the narrator that is announced in the inclusio around the story, that Israel was a land without leadership (Judges 19:1; 21:25). The story of deliverance and mercy for Lot as an individual contrasts with the divinely sanctioned judgement without mercy, upon the tribes of Israel (Judg 20:28, 35, 48; 21:10-11). Judgement on a corporate level is matched by mercy on the personal level.

The direction the two stories take in the end points to a further significant difference between them, namely that Genesis focuses upon the relationships between Israel and her neighbours, Moab and Ammon, while Judges 19-21 is preoccupied with tribal relationships within Israel. The historical priority of the latter issue provides a separate argument for my conclusion that the story of Judges is prior to that of Genesis. A comparison of the two reflects the view of the prophetic traditions about Sodom which affirm that Israel was as much under divine judgement as her neighbours, if not more so.

The preceding analysis demonstrates that the passages in Genesis and Judges exhibit significant verbal parallels along with clear differences in focus and intention. This is especially evident in the second scene. It is possible that a difference of intention would explain the three places where the language used in Genesis stands out because it is totally different from that of Judges, although one should not expect such an analysis to provide a neat rationale for every feature of the Genesis story. The three examples are the words of invitation into the house (Gen 19:2; Judges 19:20), the details of the refreshment offered (Gen 19:3; Judges 19:19), and the way the sanctity of hospitality is expressed (Gen 19:8; Judges 19:23). The longer invitation speech of Lot may be explained by the narrator's purpose to highlight the initial refusal from the messengers, despite such a warm offer. Both the deferential character of Lot's speech and the details of refreshment may represent the
intention to establish a correspondence between Lot and Abraham (Gen 18:2-8). The third difference suggests that the narrator of Genesis 19 did not draw directly from Judges 19 but from a different version of the same story.

3. Noah found grace in the sight of YHWH

I turn now to consider links between Genesis 19 and the story of Noah and the Deluge (Genesis 6-9). These stories are of greatly different length and do not show much correspondence in terms of plot details, but both describe a physical catastrophe as a divine judgement from which one family is delivered and both conclude with a separate episode involving a sexual element. Both stories are predicated upon a divine soliloquy which contemplates destruction in the light of what YHWH saw (Gen 6:5-7; 18:20-21).

The tables below show that the story of Lot is linked most strongly to that of Noah in Act One: Scenes Three and Five, and especially in Act Two. The one link with Scene Two (no. 12) is very strong and comes precisely where the narrator of Genesis 19 departs from the plot of Judges 19. Scene Four and the Interlude have only weak links. Scene Six has no parallel but makes an allusion to the earlier story. The significance of the ten narrative parallels is apparent from the fact that none of the shared plot elements (1-8) appear elsewhere in Genesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative parallels between Genesis 6-7 and 19:1-26</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Married children are included in the offer of deliverance (6:18 &amp; 7:1; 19:14-15, Sc. 3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Destruction from above in the form of rain (water, 7:4; fire and sulphur, 19:24, Sc. 5).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Upheaval from below (the fountains of the deep, 7:11; the overthrow, 19:25, Sc. 5).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. All life is destroyed (every creature, 7:23; all inhabitants and growing things, 19:25, Sc. 5).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

261 The same intention may explain the robust response of the men of Sodom and its allusion to Lot as judge and as sojourner, which terms elsewhere apply to Abraham (Gen 18:19; 20:1).

262 I will here treat the story of the Deluge as a unity, although literary criticism has identified two complete accounts entwined together.

263 The language of 'looking back' in Scene Six recalls the stance of Noah's son's in Gen 9:23.

264 The theme of knowing is especially significant elsewhere in the case of Adam and Eve (3:7), Jacob (31:32) and Judah (38:16).

265 The same word 'destroy' (šabat, Piel) found in Genesis 19 is used in Gen 6:13 & 17; 9:11, 13-15.
Narrative parallels between Genesis 6-9 and 19:30-38

6. For both Noah and Lot the final place of safety is up in the hills (8:4; 19:17; 30).266
7. No others have survived (6:17; 8:21; 19:31).266
8. Both men become drunk from wine and are exposed to their children (9:20-27; 19:32-35).
9. The theme of knowing: Noah knew (9:24); Lot did not know (19:33, 35).
10. The final episodes give the names of the grandsons of Noah and Lot (Gen 9:18; 19:37f).

I show below another four linguistic connections between the two stories, each of which expresses the role of the divine. Relative to the common plot elements above, the following parallels occur at different positions in the two stories.

Other linguistic connections between Genesis 6-8 and 19.

11. Both men found favour with YHWH (6:8; 19:19, Sc. 4).267
12. Both men are made secure by the divine hand which shut the door (7:16; 19:10, Sc. 2).268
13. The verb to lift up expresses divine support of Noah in the ark (7:17) and of Lot in his removal to Zoar (19:21, Sc. 4).
14. Divine favour is also expressed by the verb to remember (8:1; 19:29, 1)

From the several unique parallels between the stories of Lot and Noah, I conclude that they derive from a common tradition. As the Deluge story is known to be an ancient tradition common to Israel and Babylon, the writer of Genesis 19 presumably had knowledge of it and adapted it, beginning at the end of Scene Two.

**Literary and ideological differences**

The divine determination to destroy, which is present from the beginning in the story of the Deluge (6:7 & 13; 7:4), first appears with regard to Sodom in Genesis 19: Scene Three.269 Until then it is still in doubt. The preceding soliloquy of Genesis 18 and Scenes One and Two of Genesis 19 show the writer’s intention to reorient the story away from the theme of corporate judgement to that of

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266 Lods (1927) sees here a primeval myth of the origins of humanity. This conception is supported by the echo of Genesis 1:28 in 9:1-2, 7.

267 This phrase appears as an introductory explanation from the narrator in the case of Noah but as a testimony from hindsight on the part of Lot. Elsewhere in Tanakh it is said only of Moses and Gideon.

268 The Hebrew *sagar* (to shut) is not an uncommon word in Tanakh but with God as subject appears elsewhere only in 1 Sam 1:5-6 and Job 12:14 and these texts do not refer to a door.

269 The Hebrew root ‘to destroy’ found in Genesis 6-9 differs from that used in Genesis 18-19.
individual deliverance. This reorientation is carried through in the priority and length of the accounts of personal encounter and divine deliverance in Scenes Three and Four. The report of divine judgement on Sodom is brief by comparison with the other scenes in Genesis 19 and with the extensive detail of the Deluge. The writer introduces into the deliverance of Lot an agonistic aspect entirely absent from the story of Noah. Hence the affirmation of divine favour upon Lot comes only after his struggle and deliverance. The narrator's interest in the relationship of the individual before YHWH also appears in different way in the story of Lot's wife.

By comparing the sequels we find that unlike Noah, who made himself drunk by over-indulgence, Lot became drunk by the design of his daughters and may be excused. There may be an implied irony here since Noah is described as righteous (Gen 6:9) while Lot is not. Noah's awareness of Ham's action is essential to the plot in regard to the curse pronounced over Canaan (9:25). Equally, Lot, being unaware, has no occasion to curse his daughters for their actions and the narrator places no curse on Moab and Ben Ammi. The relatively favourable treatment of Lot and of his daughters compared with that of Ham, undercuts the common view that the final Act of Genesis 19 is an Israelite polemic against its neighbours. One would expect the writer to duplicate the explicit condemnation if that reading was intended. Instead, the writer deliberately sets the action in the hills in both physical and temporal isolation from the pre-existing world and records the absence of other potential partners for the daughters (19:31), as in the story of Noah (7:23). He thus allows the reader no basis for condemnation of Moab and Ammon as offspring of incest.

I conclude that the latter portion of Genesis 19 draws upon the ancient account of the Deluge to emphasise the favour of YHWH and to show that it extends beyond those designated as righteous. This conclusion differs from that of Westermann (1985a: 297) who emphasises catastrophe.

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270 My conclusion goes beyond the general point made by Skinner (1910: 309) who attributes the brevity of description of physical phenomena to the main interest of Hebrew legend in human character and action.

271 Recognition of the emphasis in the story of Lot upon agon, divine favour and individual salvation undercuts the unfavourable comparison of Lot with Noah offered by Smelik (1993).

272 To the extent that the incest of Lot and his daughters represents a new creation, Lot's ignorance of the action may allude to the sleep of Adam at the time when his rib was taken to form the female companion essential to their reproduction (Gen 2:21).

273 The renewal to Noah of the divine command to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth (8:17; 9:1) may be understood as a motivation for the daughters of Lot.

274 Westermann (1985a: 297), with Zimmerli, reaches this view after rejecting the emphasis of Gunkel and subsequent commentators upon the etiological elements in Genesis 19 regarding the
However, it is consistent with the evidence of Scenes One and Two of Genesis 19 which similarly adapt a tradition like Judges 19 to focus on the deliverance of Lot. On the corporate level, Genesis 19 establishes a place for communities beyond Israel who might otherwise be under divine curse.

4. **Into Zoar and out again**

A link between Lot and the town of Zoar is set out in two different ways in Genesis 13, 14 and 19. In Gen 13:10, Zoar denotes the limit of the fertile circle of the Jordan that Lot sees from the heights near Bethel. A different tradition may be in view in Genesis 14 and 19 which link Zoar to the cities of the plain, including Sodom.\(^{275}\) Outside of the Lot traditions in Genesis, Zoar is mentioned in Tanakh only three times. In the prophetic references to Zoar (Isa 15:5; Jer 48:34), the town appears as a place of refuge for Moab, as it is for Lot in Genesis 19.\(^{276}\) Deut 34:3 describes Zoar as the limit of the view of Moses on Mt Pisgah. This reference draws attention to seven links in Deuteronomy 34 between the stories of Lot and Moses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literary connections between Lot and Moses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A hill setting becomes the closing scene for both Lot and Moses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Lot's cave, like Mt Pisgah, appears to be east of Jordan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Zoar is seen from the heights by Lot and Moses (Gen 13:10; Deut 34:3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. In both cases their specific burial locations are unknown.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. For different reasons, neither character enjoys the benefits of the land promised to Abraham.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Tragedy appears as hopeful prospects are finally not realised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Both stories of Lot and Moses end with the phrase 'until this day' (Gen 19:37,38; Deut 34:6).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

name of Zoar, the fate of Sodom, and the origin of the Moabites and Ammonites. He seems to take little account of the significant intertextual links which highlight the deliverance theme.

The explanation that Bela, the fifth city under attack, is Zoar shows that the writer understood Zoar to be a well known place, like Kadesh (14:7), and also indicates an historical basis for the account. The Septuagint refers to Zoar as Zogora, which was located by the Crusaders as Seghor, a substantial oasis at the southern tip of the Dead Sea (see Driver, 1913: 169). This location is consistent with a reference in Josephus (*The Jewish War*, Book IV, viii, 4) and with the location shown on a map on the floor of a Byzantine Church (ca. 600 CE) at Madaba in the region of ancient Moab. Aharoni (1979: 35) identifies Zoar with es Safi, one of four ancient villages located between Bab edh Dhra (on the tongue of the Dead Sea) and the beginning of the Arabah.

These references indicate a location at the southern end of the Dead Sea where Moabites might flee to the borders of Edom at the Brook Zered.
These links do not seem to be incidental and they provide another indication that the Lot traditions have been presented by those within Israel who had a sympathetic view of them. This possibility is further enhanced by the association between Lot and Moses that is established through two Deuteronomistic themes. Both men are characterised in the Levitical role of judge and are rejected by their fellows (Gen 19:7-8; Ex 2:14). As a sojourner, Lot shares with Moses, a Levite, in the Deuteronomistic concern for the homeless.

5. Preserving the seed

A compelling article by Harold Fisch (1982) elaborates upon the links between the stories of Lot's daughters, Judah's daughter-in-law, Tamar, and Naomi's daughter-in-law, Ruth. Fisch outlines a structure of eight features in each story:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lot's daughters, and the daughters-in-law of Judah and Naomi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Separation: of Lot (Gen 13:11), Judah (38:1) and Elimelech (Ruth 1:1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Disaster: Sodom is destroyed, male members of the families die.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Abandonment: the women are left widowed or childless.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Redemption: a male ensures the family line is continued (Lot, Judah, Boaz).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The bed-trick: the initiative of the women is crucial (Gen 19:32, 38:14; Ruth 3:3-6).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Celebration: drunken Lot, the shearing festivity and the barley harvest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Degrees of legitimacy: Lot is ignorant; Judah recognises justice; Boaz receives legal recognition and title.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Ancestry: Moab the ancestor of Ruth, and Ammon; Perez the ancestor of Boaz, and Zerah; Obed the ancestor of David.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To these features we may add those identified by Bos (1988: 39, 64) in her study of Tamar, Jael and Ruth, namely the unexpected location of the initiative by the women, the symbols of fertility conveyed by the location (threshing floor, the cave as womb) and the ironic use of verbs of seeing and knowing. Bos notes that Ruth and Naomi provide an early example in literature of what an alliance between women can accomplish. The common purpose of Jael and Deborah is also an example, as is the case of Lot's daughters.

For Fisch, the common concern of the three stories with the ancestry of David suggests they belonged to a single clan concerned with the covenant history culminating in David. Fisch's treatment (436) is somewhat inconsistent in itself, and with my own reading, where he speaks of the Ruth-Boaz relationship as 'redeeming' the division between Abraham and Lot, and of Ruth as

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277 Note that Deuteronomy (17:9; 19:17; 21:5) combines the originally distinct roles of judge (Exod 18:13-25) and Levite (Numbers 3 and 8).
redeemer of Lot's daughters. The intertextual relationships of the three stories call for a positive assessment of Lot's daughters. The story of Ruth re-affirms that one outside of covenant, such as Lot, may experience something of the bond between YHWH and Abraham/Israel. This affirmation is also conveyed in the language of the text. First, the words of Ruth describe her intimate relationship with Naomi in the same possessive language as the relationship of YHWH and the people of Israel: your people, my people; your God my God (Ruth 1:16; Ex 6:7; Lev 26:12).

The words of Naomi are also significant where she describes Ruth by the term hēseḏ in respect of her loyalty to both her dead husband and her living mother-in-law (1:8) and to her prospective husband (3:10). By implication she experiences in return the loyalty of YHWH invoked by Naomi, which occurs according to the Torah of Israel in regard to Levirate marriage (4:13). Lot is not described as loyal to YHWH but the hēseḏ of the messengers towards him implies that his defence of them is an expression of loyalty, establishing a relationship quite apart from the Torah. The intertextual communication between the two stories has the same significance as that linking Lot and Rahab. The relationship of Moab and YHWH is constituted not only by kinship through Israel but by loyalty and by Torah.

Jobling (1993: 131) finds the stories of Tamar and of Ruth to be intrusive elements which subvert the main Heilsgeschichte story, hinting that we could do without exodus and conquest, Moses and all the elaborated theology associated with going down into Egypt. Whether or not this was the intention of the compilers, such a reading supports a reading of the Lot story as a subversion of the more exclusive covenant theology linked to Abraham.

6. Summary

The intertextual study of Genesis 19 shows that it is composed largely of two sections (19:1-11, 12-38) each of which, apart from the Interlude concerning Abraham, has close and unique links of language and plot to another text in the Hebrew Bible. In both sections the material in Genesis is considerably more developed and allows the conclusion that the writer of Genesis 19 has adapted other material to emphasise deliverance (Scenes Two and Three). This adaptation is also apparent in comparing the theme of deliverance in Sodom with the prophetic emphasis upon destruction.

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278 Fisch himself draws attention to Judah's affirmation of Tamar's action: women who act to preserve seed are counted righteous (Gen 38:26). The daughters need no redemption, nor does the relationship of Abraham and Lot, which remains intact after their parting.

279 Similarly, Zakovitch (1993: 146-147), on the basis of allusions in the book of Ruth to Abraham, sees Ruth presented as a more noble figure than the nation's father, Abraham.
Scene Four also stands out as the writer’s own creative work. While it has linguistic links to Genesis 6-9, it is distinct in its plot elements in regard to the dialogue between Lot and the messenger. The writer has apparently chosen to place Lot alongside Noah within divine favour, and to reaffirm the prophetic treatment of Zoar as a place of refuge for Moab, since reference to Lot’s stay there otherwise has no significance in the ongoing story. This allusion to the Zoar of the prophetic texts recalls their visions of the restoration of Moab and supports a reading of Scene Four which goes far beyond the level of etiology to affirm the heritage of Lot in harmony with the perspective of Act Two. Scene Four thus has links to Act Two not only in relation to the story of Noah (points 11 and 13 above) but in terms of traditions concerning Moab and Zoar. Given the parallel between Lot and Noah, the parallels between Lot and Moses may also be a deliberate creation of the writer of Act Two.

Consistent with the above reading is the evidence of both Scene One of Genesis 19, and of the Interlude, that Genesis 19 has been constructed with Genesis 18 in view. However, opposite purposes are apparent where Scene One is affirming of Lot alongside Abraham, but the Interlude is affirming of Abraham and makes Lot incidental. Moreover, the link between Abraham and Noah in the words ‘God remembered’ (Gen 8:1; 19:29) creates a parallel which is repugnant to the pattern of Acts One and Two in which Noah is in parallel to Lot. The intertextual study thus supports the distinction made in the earlier literary analysis between the merit theology of 19:29 and the mercy theology earlier in the chapter. These observations are important for the argument of the following chapter that the writer of Acts One and Two differs from that of Genesis 18 and the Interlude.

The intertextual studies highlight three major themes in Acts One and Two: 1) the significance of hospitality, 2) deliverance from destruction, and 3) preservation of the family line. Each theme is elaborated in ways that go beyond the intertexts. The issue of hospitality is enhanced by transferring the concern to the host, Lot, and introducing an opposition in the ABA pattern, as well as by the opening allusions to Genesis 18. The deliverance theme is doubly emphasised by placing elements of the Judges and the Deluge stories together, by placing Lot in danger at his door and by portraying his lingering in Sodom. The account of preservation of the family line is strengthened by the story of the mocking sons-in-law left in Sodom and the subsequent need to resort to incest, as well as by the final focus of the chapter. The agonistic elements in both Acts, absent in the intertexts, strengthen the attention given to the individual characters in the story. The operation of divine mercy is especially developed, not only by explicit references not found in the Deluge story but also by the absence of any reference to the criterion of righteousness or to the morality of the action or curse. These particular characteristics of the accounts in Genesis 19 which are apparent from the intertextual comparisons further support a reading pointing towards a positive view of Moab and Ammon and their relations with Israel.
HISTORY OF TRADITIONS

A study of the history of the traditions about Lot provides another pathway towards a fruitful interpretation of his story and its relevance to the relations between Israel, Moab and Ammon. The opening section of this chapter provides a rationale for such a study in which the ideological elements of scripture are recognised alongside the historical, and both are understood in terms of their sociological function. The conventional source criticism of the ancestral narrative (Genesis 12-25) provides a starting point for analysis of the individual Lot texts. Of particular interest is the possibility of east Jordanian influence. In a departure from the conventional view, I argue that Genesis 19 is not from the same author as Genesis 18 but exhibits a post-exilic Sitz im Leben reflecting the interests of the Deuteronomists.

1. History and Ideology

The previous chapters illustrate the usefulness of a synchronic, literary methodology applied without dependence upon historical considerations. However, historical studies are also fruitful and provide an element of control in interpretation. It is helpful to distinguish two different aspects of the historical study of biblical traditions. On the one hand there is the question of the history of the events and characters that comprise the content of a text, which is the study of historicity. On the other hand is the question of the history of the process behind the text, the telling, writing and elaborating of the stories found in Tanakh, which is the study of historiography. These two studies are closely entwined and the results of the first depend on the understanding of the second, since we may not assume that modern categories of the historical are appropriate to the ancient text.

The historiography of Genesis has a distinctly antiquarian character: the book expresses viewpoints on situations far removed from the time of writing. That historicity was not an over-riding concern for tradents in ancient Israel is affirmed by Thompson (1992: 206, 209) who notes the way the

280 A helpful introduction to the Old Testament as history is given by John Rogerson (1982).
ancestral narrative maintains a progression of plot at the expense of chronological order. The literary creativity within the text means that we cannot finally distinguish biblical historiography from fiction in terms of form. So Younger (1990a: 35) differentiates historical narrative within Tanakh by its commitment to a real rather than an imaginary subject. I acknowledge with Thompson (1974a: 315) that modern archaeological and linguistic studies can only give credence to the broad social and political parameters of the ancestral narrative, not to the details of the accounts.

Apart from the historical element, two key features of biblical historiography are its ideological and its diachronic character. Boadt (1984: 78-9) highlights the ideological motivation that dominates the historiography of Tanakh when he refers to the 'almost positive dislike for exact facts and specific dates' of the oral cultures of the ancient near east and relates this to their religious interest in the patterns of events. This motivation is elaborated by Prewitt (1990: 35) who explains that the major concern of biblical historiography was not to detail what actually happened but to provide a culturally acceptable understanding of the past, and of how past events constitute the present reality of the historiographer. For Prewitt (1990: 94), ultimately it is human consciousness which is the subject matter of history. He rightly states (1981: 88), 'the textual relations of the materials form a sociology of Judah rather than a history of Judah', and in some cases sociological facts may rest in historical or political fictions. A minimalist view of the historical aspects of a tradition can still support a fruitful sociological treatment because we have firmer historical foundations on which to test the truth of the reported social phenomena than we have to assess the historicity of details of the ancestors' lives.

The diachronic character of the Tanakh texts is apparent in their incorporation of older traditions along with the creative writing and editing of the first redactor and the elaborations of subsequent

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281 Wenham (1994: xxxvi-viii) acknowledges this much but affirms the validity and importance of historical enquiry regarding biblical language and customs on the basis of potentially falsifiable evidence. A recent article affirming historical aspects of the Patriarchal [sic] Age is provided by Kitchen (1995).

282 Moving away from the categories of true and false, Mowe (1990: 577-8) elaborates the notion of fiction in terms of the shaping and arranging of tradition.

283 Here I include the written organisation of existing traditions as an element of historiography, rather than limit the definition to original authorship.
commentators. A recent defence of a single authorship of the Pentateuch is provided by Whybray (1987) who marshals arguments against aspects of both the documentary and tradition history hypotheses. Whybray rightly values an integrative, functional approach that arises out of synchronic studies. However, while his arguments undercut the more positivist elements of diachronic studies and expose some of their inadequate assumptions, the diachronic reality of the text of Genesis cannot be denied, despite the continued lack of consensus among scholars regarding the details. To the extent that the Torah received canonical status well before the Tanakh was finalised, those redactors with a new viewpoint would not have felt free to overwrite what was written but only to embellish it.

The notion of intratextual reading, developed by Lindbeck (1984: 117, 136), refers to the way in which a tradition is transformed in its use, as illustrated above by the eirenic and hostile traditions regarding Israel’s arrival in the Plains of Moab.

The interplay of these elements is elucidated by Sternberg (1985:15-17) and by Campbell and O’Brien (1993: 17). Boorer (1989) affirms the value of a diachronic reading of the JE and D materials in Genesis – Kings, and shows how alternative conceptions of the relation between J and D assume contrasting ideologies on the part of the final redactors.

Moye (1990) gives a comprehensive account of the relation of myth and history in Genesis.
because they are considered also to possess some transcendent revelatory value for Israel.\textsuperscript{288} On the one hand, existing traditions may be enhanced to embody such mythical elements, as illustrated in the later Jewish account of Abraham as the one for whose sake God created the world (Gen R. 4:3). Through the historicisation of history, an historical figure now serves to legitimate a religious ideology at a cosmic level. An opposite process, the historicisation of myth, also occurs, e.g. in the story of Abraham as a baby (Deut R 2:27) who is saved from the emperor Nimrod by being hidden in the bulrushes. In this example, an existing motif signifying divine destiny, which is familiar in the story of Moses but already featured much earlier in the story of Sargon I, is adapted in a new context to signify divine purpose in the life of Abraham.\textsuperscript{289}

In the last century, the historicisation of solar and lunar mythology in Hebrew scripture was of special interest to students of comparative mythology, such as Goldziher and Jeremias. They aimed to show, I believe rightly, that the Hebrews possessed a capacity for mythology like all other races. Goldziher (1967: 195) asserts that Lot as a nomad is a lunar figure and that his name, from the verb ‘to cover’, represents the covering of the night. The incest scene portrays the intercourse of the dark heavy night with his more lively daughters, the morning and evening glow. Such assertions now seem speculative and sometimes arbitrary.\textsuperscript{290} However, it can hardly be denied that the biblical writers drew on universal motifs in constructing their stories. The stories of Lot and Noah reflect elements of the Sumerian epic about Atrahasis when the gods decide to destroy humanity because of the noise, but Atrahasis is saved by Enki. The offers of hospitality to divine strangers by Abraham

\textsuperscript{288} Such a functional view is preferred by Rogerson (1974: 188) following his comprehensive review of a variety of understandings of myth in Old Testament interpretation. Similarly for Gaster (1981: xxxiv) the characteristic of myth is that it expresses things in terms of their impact, not of their essence.

\textsuperscript{289} Van Seters' notion (1992: 25) of 'a dynamic interchange between myth and history' is misleading as these are not exclusive domains and the two processes are not symmetrical.

\textsuperscript{290} For example, Jeremias (1911: Vol. 2, 16-20) sees the separation of Abraham and Lot as an expression of the opposition between Sun and Moon respectively but also equates the deliverance of Lot from Sodom with the deliverance of the sun from the underworld. Neither of these inconsistent views are in harmony with the assertion of Goldziher (xxii) that lunar and solar mythologies were typical of nomadic and agricultural societies respectively. De Vries (1987: 483) advances a quite different view that a sun god originally stood in the place not of Lot but of YHWH who brought judgement upon Sodom.
and Lot are similar to accounts of human hospitality and divine rescue in the mythology of Greece and Rome and other cultures.  

These examples of the historicisation of myth may throw some light on what Martin Noth (1972: 3) considered to be 'the dark and impenetrable area of the preliterary oral tradition' of the Pentateuch. Of greater interest in this study is the process of mythicisation within the history of biblical traditions by which Lot and Abraham, initially differentiated only to a minor degree, eventually hold very different significance.  

The mythicisation of Abraham is most apparent in the promise traditions, through which Abraham uniquely represents the ideology of divine election. We must equally consider the mythicisation of the Lot traditions in Genesis 19 and the mythical significance of kinship between Israel and her eastern neighbours, which expresses the enigma of a covenant God who also offers mercy to those outside that covenant.

The above references to comparative mythology in older studies provide a backdrop for recent comparisons of Israelite and Greek historiography, notably by Van Seters (1992: 40-42) and by Freedman and Mandell (1993: xiii) who assert a probable direct relationship between Tanakh and Herodotus.  

Lateiner (1992: 212) provides an analysis of Greek historiography which clearly shows some elements in common with Israelite writing but the hypothesis of a special relationship has not found much support. The chronological disparity between the Hebrew and Greek tradition histories and the range of parallels outside of Greek mythology, including Sumerian, Hittite and

291 Gaster (1981: 156-61) and Letellier (1995: 210-248) give examples of a variety of folklore elements found in Genesis 18 and 19. These include a story from Fasti (5: 447-83) by Ovid of the gods Zeus, Poseidon and Hermes who receive the hospitality of an aged and childless couple whom they reward with the gift of a son, Orion. A similar reward is made in Ovid's story of Philemon and Baucis (Metamorphosis, 8: 625ff) who entertain Jupiter and Mercury in the guise of two travellers. When later the surrounding district is inundated, the gods deliver them to a mountain top where their home is transformed into a temple.

292 Moye (1990: 580) sees in Genesis a movement from historicised myth toward mythicised history.

293 Freedman and Mandell compare Herodotus' History with the Torah, Samuel and Kings and note similarities of form, e.g. the confessional viewpoint of the implied narrator, and of content, e.g. ethnography. They conclude that both works represent the adjustment to Persian power in the late sixth century BCE.
other sources, count against the hypothesis. In the case of Lot and Sodom, Jeremias (1911: Vol. 2: 40) cites a Buddhist story of seventh century China with several clear parallels, which shows that geographical, chronological and cultural differences were no barrier to the dissemination of a good story.

2. Traditions in Genesis

To embark on this analysis without reference to the Documentary Hypothesis, popularised by Wellhausen (1883), of the four literary sources of the Torah, J, E, D, and P, would be to reinvent the wheel. It is more fruitful to assume Wellhausen's analysis and to develop a critique of it as it applies to the Lot traditions. Such a critique will embody scholarship subsequent to Wellhausen that incorporated studies of oral tradition and forms of smaller units emphasised by Gunkel. Among the

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294 Thompson (1992: 207) asserts a strong contrast between the two. Bloom (1987: 2) concludes from a comparison of Genesis and the Iliad (which pre-dates 700 BCE), that the Yahwist and Homer 'have absolutely nothing in common except their uncanny sublimity'. A treatment of the genre of epic by Conroy also emphasises the differences between Greek and Hebrew writing. While both treat the relationship between the human and the divine, Conroy (1980:21) concludes that, unlike Greek epic, the biblical text shows little sign of a poetic original and does not cast the Israelite characters in a heroic mould. In relation to Genesis 13, Dorothy Irvin (1978: 60-61) recounts the Hittite story of Appu's two sons, Brother Right and Brother Wrong. The latter proposes separation in order to acquire the best of the property but finally comes off worst. Gaster (1969: 159-60.) refers to a story from India in which a woman who turns back is turned to stone.

295 The story describes a rich but heretical city that gave no food to a visiting Arhat and pelted him with earth and sand. One man took pity and the Arhat warned him to save himself within seven days when the city would be smothered by a rain of earth and sand. The man's relatives would not heed his warning and mocked him. The man saved himself by an underground passage.

296 Surveys of relevant scholarship are provided by De Purry (1992), Van Seters (1992: 8-23) and Carr (1996: 4-11, 143-9). The hypothesis of distinct traditions is built firstly on the obvious differences between the first two chapters of Genesis, also evident later in Genesis. Alternative Hebrew designations for the divinity also feature, namely *elohim* and the tetragrammaton YHWH. These differences determine two major strands of text designated as P (Priestly material) and J (the Yahwist tradition). Campbell and O'Brien (1993) have published a separate reconstruction of J, following the work of Noth (1972). Significant differences in viewpoint between these strands have been elaborated by many commentators. For example, Alter (1986: 49-55) contrasts the orderliness and coherence of P and the complexity of human relationships in J. E denotes a limited body of texts in Genesis that are unconnected to the Lot traditions. D denotes the material of Deuteronomy.
variety of contemporary views concerning sources in Genesis, some are highly analytical while
others still emphasise the unity of the literature of the Torah. I begin within the main stream of
scholarship which still acknowledges within Genesis a stage of tradition more or less identified with
J, the work of the Yahwist, along with a P tradition of priestly origin that is evident within J. I
assume with most commentators that the Yahwist is to be identified with the stage at which the
promise addresses, particularly 12:1-3, were integrated into the ancestral narrative.

The treatment below will consider the ancestral narrative as a compilation, J, including original
writing, that underwent redaction within the P and other traditions. Against that background I
will undertake a critique of the attribution of texts to a later P redaction, which in the case of the Lot
traditions are Gen 11:31-32; 12:4b-5; 13:6, 11b-12a; 19:29. I also consider whether Genesis 14
should be attributed to yet another source. The interrelations between the Lot texts will necessitate

297 In current debate, continuing disagreement about the dating of the major sources has led to
radical rejection of the methodology of source criticism. Rendtorff (1977:143) argues that literary
criticism, focused upon larger units, is incompatible with tradition history studies, concerned with
the smaller units. See similarly Rendsburg (1986: 104). However, in his examination of alternative
approaches to the Jacob traditions by Noth and Blum, Wynn-Williams (1996: 283) concludes that
Rendtorff's view of incompatibility is 'ultimately without much weight'. Alexander (1982) argues
for the structural unity of the ancestral narrative, including Genesis 14, and provides a useful
critique of certain arguments in favour of a variety of sources. However, his proposed structural
patterns in the narrative are not convincing. Moberly (1992a: 84-6, 1992b: 83) considers that the
ancestral narrative is an authentic account of Israelite religion prior to Mosaic Yahwism, created to
provide a foil for Mosaic Yahwism. However, Moberly's argument depends on a linear view of the
development of Israelite religion which does not take account of the dialectic within both J and P
between more and less exclusive viewpoints. Nor does Moberly's argument account for the evidence
of the story of Lot, in which the prophetic elements are clearly from a time later than the Exodus
and Sinai and look beyond the boundary of the Mosaic religion.

298 A history of scholarship regarding the Yahwist is found in de Pury (1992).

299 My approach reflects the suitably cautious analysis of Carr (1996: viii) who affirms the value of
both synchronic and diachronic readings. The alternative view of Coats (1983: 20) that P as a
whole has its own form-critical integrity remains a possibility but is not relevant to the brief P texts
in the midst of the Lot stories. Note the alternative viewpoint of Wenham (1987: xxxviii) that J,
rather than P, is the last major redactor of both the primeval history and the ancestral narrative.

300 This analysis, which goes back as far as Hupfield (1853), is followed by Noth and by Coats
some degree of reference forward in my discussion, as well as backward, since the major treatment of Lot in Genesis 19 must influence conclusions about the briefer references to Lot in earlier chapters.

The identification of distinct traditions and redactions within the ancestral narrative clearly depends upon the criteria that are used. Any easy appeal to dispose of a text or word as a later redaction, in order to sustain a particular view of the history of a tradition, must be carefully scrutinised. An initial consideration in regard to the tradition history of a text is the extent to which its plot and structure is essential to its wider context or depends upon it. Disjunction or incongruity or elaboration in the text may be signs of editorial work. With regard to variations in vocabulary, I lean to the conservative approach of Noth (1972) who considered that the unity of a narrative should be judged largely by the coherence of the story and its thematic consistency, allowing for a variety of language and style and for repetitions which may result from the writer's incorporation of existing material into his work. However, it seems useful to raise for consideration the way certain Hebrew words seem to be characteristic of a particular ideology or of a particular era of Israelite history, especially those words in the Lot stories which are rare in Tanakh.

In terms of subject matter, I have taken up Westermann's criterion (1985a: 29, 39) that those texts with a nomadic, family setting are the most likely to embody traditions that go back to the ancestral era. In some cases these texts also describe situations of family or social strife which Coats (1983: 33) affirms is a theme more fundamental and encompassing than the promise traditions confined to the family of Abraham. The presence of explicit ideology is also a marker of tradition history, but in a limited way. An evolutionary view of Israelite ideology as a guide to tradition chronology is untenable since, as Richardson (1953: 15) affirms, a dialectic between national and universal ideologies persisted throughout Israelite history.301 However, I will assume that texts with a greater proportion of explicit ideology over against narrative generally represent a later tradition following a period of reflection within Israel on past events.

301 This point applies both to Van Seter's view (1992: 260, 330) that the figure of Abraham represents the democratisation of a royal ideology (Gen 12:1-3) and to the opposite argument of Wenham (1994: xxxiv) who asserts that religious tolerance is not characteristic of later Israel. In fact, such a dialectic is especially evident in the post-exilic era, as shown by the different emphases of Nehemiah and Ruth concerning mixed marriages. Clines (1990a) elaborates on a dialectic between the primary and secondary histories in Tanakh (Genesis to Kings, over against the remaining historiographical books), although he does not use this term. The notion of the old testament of the Old Testament, advanced by Moberly (1992b) in his comparison of Yahwist and Mosaic ideologies, fails to recognise the dialectic.
Of special interest is the relationship between the Genesis traditions of Lot and those of Abraham, particularly the question whether the Lot traditions contribute to a perspective upon the Abraham traditions or, as I believe, treat an entirely different concern. The following analysis, along with the results of the intertextual studies of the previous chapter, provides a *prima facie* case that the author of Genesis 19 is not the author of Genesis 18 and the other Abraham narratives. Concerning the history of the Abraham traditions, I will limit myself to identifying rather than justifying the positions I take, with reference to appropriate studies.

*Genesis 11:27-32 Lot's pedigree*

This passage, in which Lot is first introduced, exhibits priestly language and themes both in the opening title: 'the generations (*toledot*) of Terah' (v. 27) and in the closing details of age (v. 32). V. 31 also appears to be from P according to its similarity to 12:5 and 36:6, which I elaborate upon below in connection with Genesis 13. However, within Genesis 11 there are two introductions of Lot as son of Haran (vv. 27, 31) and it is doubtful that both derive from P, considering that the reference to Lot in the J text (12:4a) requires prior introduction. With Wellhausen, I believe literary considerations show that vv. 28-30 are from the Yahwist, to which I add 27b. For this reason I distinguish the *toledot* formula in 11:27a as a conclusion to the foregoing P genealogy, and attribute to J the following genealogical data, which P has already noted in v. 26. This attribution is supported by the evidence of Gen 25:19 where the same infrequent perfect form of the verb 'begat' appears in a similar, composite text. It also provides for the necessary introduction in J of Haran (11:28). J (v. 27) therefore differs from P (v. 31) in introducing Lot alongside his father and uncles, in accordance with the mutuality between Lot and Abraham that I considered earlier.

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302 See also Gen 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1.

303 Blum (1984:440) assigns all of 11:27-32 to P because of links between vv. 27 and 28 (which I have attributed to J) and between v. 31 and 27-29. Van Seters (1992: 202) explains why this view is not tenable. The two reference to Ur of the Chaldees in vv. 28 and 31 need not be from the same redaction.

304 In Gen 11:27 the perfect form of the verb 'begat' (*yalad*) differs from the *vav* consecutive imperfect used throughout the preceding genealogy from P, as also throughout Genesis 5. This is in itself a minor grammatical difference but with the repetition of the genealogy found in 11:26 suggests a distinct tradition. The text in Gen 25:19 is similarly composite, beginning 'The *toledot* of Isaac, son of Abraham', and proceeding with the superfluous statement 'Abraham begat Isaac' which does not refer to the generations of Isaac but of Abraham. My analysis is reflected in Rhythmer (*The Bible in Order*: 275) in the case of Gen 11:26 but not in 25:19 (Rhythmer: 18).
The question of the historicity of the genealogical reports in the ancestral narrative has been treated with considerable scepticism in some quarters. Speiser (1964: 79-80) finds support for an historical understanding of the genealogies. However, from the evidence within Genesis we must allow that traditions with distinct geographical origins that were attached to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have been united in a literary process.\footnote{305} An example of this appears in the next section. The question of the historicity of Lot is especially difficult because his link to Moab and Ammon is noted only in Genesis 19 and Deuteronomy 2, and no genealogical table is provided. The story can best be treated sociologically and ideologically.

\textit{Genesis 12-13 Journey and Separation}

These chapters exhibit a balance which gives unity to their final form: the promise traditions relating to Abraham that open and close the chapters encompass two stories of strife involving Abraham with Sarah and Lot respectively. Elements of itinerary twice hinge on Bethel (12:8; 13:3), and the journey out together, of Lot and Abraham, is balanced by closing reports of their separation to Sodom and Hebron respectively. In two places brief texts within the work of the Yahwist have been attributed to P, of which I accept the first but reject the second.

A priestly tradition is evident in 12:4b-5 where there is a repeated account of Abraham’s departure from Haran with a contrasting conception of Lot as dependent (12:4a, 5a). This tradition follows the form of Gen 36:6 from a substantial P text and shares the concern of other P texts with the age of the patriarch and with his ‘possessions’ (rekus). Below I set out accounts of Lot and Abraham alongside the similar priestly account of Esau and Jacob to show that we must also attribute 13:6 to P.\footnote{306} The linkage of the separation first to inadequate pasture (13:6) then to social strife (13:7) also points to distinct traditions. Note in both P texts the dependence of the family on the patriarch.

\footnote{305} Rogerson (1978: 14) notes that Bernhard Stade advanced such an hypothesis in a history of Israel published in 1881. Among others, Noth (1972: 147) builds upon this view. Alternatively, Steinberg (1993:136) argues that the genealogies of Genesis are primary and that the narratives are interruptions intended to resolve the problems that arise in the matter of heirship. Wilson (1977: 161-166) illustrates a deliberate adaptation of genealogy through his analysis of two similar genealogies in Genesis 4 (J) and Genesis 5 (P) and through an example of a recent Arabic genealogy.

\footnote{306} In rejecting evidence for P in Genesis 12-13, Rendtorff (1990: 147) appears to overlook the connection between Genesis 13 and 36. For this reason Blum (1984: 285) remains open-minded on this point.
The P insertion (12:4b-5) delineates the opening report (12:1-4a) which shows evidence of its literary creation relative to similar reports of divine speech to Isaac (Gen 26:1-3) and Jacob (31:1-3). In the final section of this chapter, I show how the Yahwist ideology in the form of the promise texts of Gen 12:2-3 represents a development of a tradition of blessing already linked to Jacob and Balaam. The stories of Abraham and Sarah in 12:6-20 also seem to be created from traditions later in Genesis about Isaac and Jacob. In any case, the plot of the next chapter does not depend upon the sojourn in Egypt (12:10b-20) but only on the reports that Lot went with Abraham (12:4a; 13:1). The reports that Lot went with Abraham (12:4a; 13:5) are significant ideologically, since Lot stands to be the first to benefit from the promise made to Abraham, although he is not included in it. This possibility could not arise where Jacob (or Isaac) was considered the original object of divine promise but is a new tradition based upon the kinship and common life of Lot and Abraham. In this way the Yahwist’s presentation of the promise tradition opens the door to an eirenic understanding of Moab and Ammon.

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307 Compare Gen 12:6-9 to similar traditions about Jacob in Shechem and Bethel, and 12:10b-20 to the similar story of Isaac (26:6-16) where the secular and sexual elements claim originality. Coats (1983:34) considers that the Isaac tradition may have been the original locus of the strife and promise motifs in the story of Abraham. Prewitt (1990: 10) suggests that Genesis 12-25 is a compilation of old sources fitted to a pattern already established in the following more complex story of Jacob and Joseph.

308 Gen 13:2 and 5 indicate, in accord with the P tradition of 12:5, that Lot and presumably Abraham were wealthy regardless of Pharaoh’s gifts. The first famine report (12:10a) may originally have provided the occasion for the lack of pasture reported in 13:6.
The distinction between P and J in Genesis 13:6 & 7 supports the view of Westermann (1985a: 172) that the separation story in J is based on a quarrel form. The vivid picture of the struggles of pastoral life in a semi-nomadic culture, without reference to religious ideology, suggests it is an ancient story. On this basis the relationship of Lot and Abraham, which is strongest in this chapter, must have been one of the earliest traditions in Genesis.309

By a closer examination of Gen 13:6 and 36:7 I now argue that the former text was adapted from the pattern of the latter. Among the precise parallels between these verses, significant differences stand out, as shown below in the comparison of the Hebrew texts with literal English translations. For ease of comparison I have interchanged the two portions of the latter verse and the bold type shows where the wording differs between the two texts. It is evident in the Hebrew language that everyone of the terms of the earlier verse are represented in the latter, mostly in the same Hebrew form and in the same word order except in one case ('support' and 'land'). Gen 13:6 does not contain the specific references to the livestock and to the sojourn in found in 36:7 B but instead exhibits a redundancy of language. For these reasons I conclude that Gen 13:6 is derived from the latter text. This analysis implies that Gen 12:5 is also secondary to 36:6. For P, the separation of Esau from Jacob provides a pattern for the separation of Abraham and Lot and for their joint separation from Terah (11:31-32).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: יָלְכָה יָדֶה יֵדֶעַ יָדֶעַ יָדֶעַ יֵדֶעַ יֵדֶעַ יֵדֶעַ</td>
<td>B: יָלְכָה יָדֶה יֵדֶעַ יֵדֶעַ יֵדֶעַ יֵדֶעַ יֵדֶעַ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>לַשֶּׁבֶת יָדֶעַ,</td>
<td>לֶאַשֶּׁבֶת יָדֶעַ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כִּי-ָחָי עָשָׂם רַב,</td>
<td>כִּי-ָחָי עָשָׂם רַב</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>יָלְכָה יָדֶעַ לֶאַשֶּׁבֶת יָדֶעַ</td>
<td>מִשָּׁכֶת יָדֶעַ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A: Nor did it support them the land,</td>
<td>B: nor was able the land of their sojourn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to live together,</td>
<td>to support them because of their livestock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: for was their substance great,</td>
<td>A: For was their substance great(er)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nor were they able to live together</td>
<td>than to live together</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reversal of the parts and the repetition in Genesis 13:6 produces a subtle change of emphasis away from the physical limitations towards the human factors involved in the separation. In 36:7A we find their substance (singular) was too great to let them share the land, while the parallel states that 'they' (Lot and Abraham, 13:5) were unable to live together. Similarly reference to the livestock

309 If Lot and Abraham were linked in the earliest traditions, there is no basis for Noth's view (1974: 152-4) that Lot was originally a forebear of pre-Moabite people in the east, later adopted by the Moabites (and in some unexplained way by the Ammonites) and only finally linked to Abraham through the etiology of Genesis 13.
in 36:7B is entirely deleted in 13:6 and again emphasis is placed on the impossibility of human cohabitation. This adaptation matches the emphasis of the Yahwist text on strife (13:7-8) but P also introduces the issue of land into the separation story.\textsuperscript{310} The way the priestly tradition uses the separation of two clans as the pattern for understanding the differentiation of nations and its concern with peaceful coexistence and adequate land shows that it represents a time when Israel was aware of its distinct identity not only in relation to others in the land but in the wider context of nations.\textsuperscript{311}

The conventional attribution of Gen 13:11b-12a to P seems to have been based upon the unproven assumption of Wellhausen that the ancestral narrative contains a continuous account from P, for which these verses provide a convenient duplication of reports. In harmony with some recent commentators, I reject this attribution since the language of these verses is inconclusive.\textsuperscript{312} The use of the infrequent verb \textit{parad}, to separate (13:11b), which appears elsewhere in texts allotted to P and to JE, echoes 13:9 and strongly reflects the mutual understanding of Lot and Abraham typical of J ('separated themselves'). The report of 13:12a exhibits the same balance between the characters and also provides a suitable closure to the preceding account. Note that the conventional literary analysis would include the reference to the cities in P but leave the identification of Sodom in J, which runs counter to the evidence of my previous chapter that reference to Sodom (13:12c) came later than the general reference to the cities.

\textsuperscript{310} The use and adaptation of existing traditions by P is explored by Carr (1996: 43-7) who describes P as a counternarrative designed to replace its counterpart.

\textsuperscript{311} The view of Kilian (1970: 26-7) that Genesis 13 explains the settlement of lands by the descendants of Abraham and Lot is not convincing since the story bears no relation to the hills of Moab nor to the Israelite settlement of Bethel which is a matter for the Jacob traditions. It is more reasonable to read the story as an illustration of appropriate land dealings for the reader rather than as an explanation of the past.

\textsuperscript{312} A priestly origin is discounted by Van Seters (1975: 313), Rendtorff (1990: 122-3), Alexander (1982: 219-20) and Blum (1984: 285). Carr (1996:105-6) maintains the P attribution but acknowledges that only slight seams are apparent here. In Noth's analysis, 'land of Canaan' appears sixteen times in J and E texts from Genesis 42-50 but it seems odd verses within a JE context have been allotted to P only because of this phrase (13:12; 16:3; 33:18a; 35:6). In my view, the promised land is not identified as Canaan in the early Yahwist material (12:1, 7; 13:15; 15:7) because the promise included a greater area (13:15). The phrase 'cities of the plain' (13:12), although found elsewhere only in 19:29 from P, is made from two words which are common in J, and both appear in Genesis 19:25. The term \textit{kikkar}, meaning plain, appears only in J texts elsewhere in Genesis (13:10-11 and 19:17, 25, 28).
The above analysis delineates Genesis 13:1-5, 7-12a as a unified and complete text that describes the separation of Abraham and Lot and the general locations they moved to, the land of Canaan and the Jordan plain respectively. There are three reasons why v. 12a should be considered the original closure to this episode. Firstly, the reference to Sodom in 13:12b-13 moves well beyond the pastoral setting and concern of the preceding account and foreshadows a change to the urban setting of Genesis 19. Secondly, 13:14-17 is a distinct promise tradition concerned only with Abraham. Thirdly, the indication that Sodom would be the eventual location of Lot matches the report of Abraham's subsequent relocation to Hebron (13:18) that apparently belongs to a later text, namely Genesis 18. This report originally provided the setting and identification of the unidentified pronoun 'him' found in 18:1, following the pattern of a fresh identification of characters at the beginning of all other chapters and sections of the ancestral narrative.

My analysis of Genesis 13 establishes the separation story as an early tradition that stands in its own right, against the view of most commentators that the chapter has little point apart from Genesis 19.\textsuperscript{313} Von Rad's (1972: 172) conclusion that the story is fictive and presupposes 'a connected story of Lot's fate', can only apply to vv. 12b-13. There is otherwise a marked contrast between the pastoral setting of Genesis 13 and the urban context of Genesis 19 and the latter chapter exhibits a relatively complex literary and ideological development. Since the promise texts 12:1-3 and 13:14-17 are from the Yahwist, the intervening strife stories must be considered pre-Yahwist, as elaborated by Westermann (1985a: 210-212) and Van Seters (1992: 246, 257).\textsuperscript{314} This means that the relationship of Lot and Abraham as kinsmen pastoralists must also be pre-Yahwist, along with the stories of Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 16 & 20).\textsuperscript{315}

\hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{313} Rendtorff (1990: 50) and Van Seters (1992: 260) consider Genesis 13 a prologue to Genesis 19. The change in geographical setting between Genesis 13 and 19 counts against the view of Van Seters (1975: 260) that settlement on the eastern plateau is part of the framework of the story of Lot.

\hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{314} Blum (1984: 273) also considers the stories of Lot and Abraham were in some way foundational blocks for the Yahwist's work but he asserts that Genesis 12 and the promise texts represent a later redaction of the existing traditions about Lot and Abraham in Genesis 13, 18-19. A critique of Blum's assertion by O'Brien (1990) defends the conventional view of the Yahwist in Genesis 12-13.

\hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{315} So Van Seters' (1992: 260) notes that the story of Lot has no adequate beginning to enable it to be isolated as a separate tradition, although this does not demand his conclusion (1975: 212-14) that the story is entirely an antiquarian composition. McKane (1979: 184) considers the Lot cycle originally independent from the Abraham traditions because it has no distinctive Israelite marks but this criterion is of little help because such marks are a feature of later tradition and those in the story of Abraham may derive from Jacob traditions.
The scenario arises here that a balanced and neutral account of separation, free of ideological commentary, was adapted to support the promise tradition regarding Abraham in Genesis 12-13 and later augmented by vv. 12b-13 to foreshadow Genesis 19. The initial adaptation transfers to Abraham (13:14) the phrase 'lift up ... eyes' which first attaches to Lot (13:10). It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the redactor deliberately incorporates Lot's location in the plain within the orbit of promise to Abraham. The story has an important function to explain how Abraham was finally differentiated from his kin according to the agenda of 12:1. It also establishes the ideal of peaceful resolution of conflict and presents an eirenic view of the relationship of Abraham and Lot and of their descendants.

*Genesis 14 Raiders from the north*

The story of Abraham rescuing Lot and the people of Sodom from the armies of the north has provided an intriguing study in tradition history since it has clear links to the surrounding ancestral narrative, especially to Genesis 15, but each of its three sections also contain distinctive features and vocabulary.\(^{316}\) Lot is only a passive character in this chapter but his rescue by Abraham parallels the rescue stories of Genesis 19 and raises the question of how the tradition histories of the two chapters may be related.

The opening chronicle (14:1-12) shows signs of an authentic original report in the inclusion of alternative names to identify ancient locations for the reader (vv. 2, 3, 7) and in the incorporation of the second list of those attacked (vv. 5-7), which has no particular function in the chapter.\(^{317}\) The 'Emim' and 'Zumim' in this list appear elsewhere in Tanakh only in antiquarian notes in Deut 2:10-12, 20-23 where they are identified as Moabite and Ammonite terms for the original inhabitants of their lands.\(^{318}\) The original chronicle presumably predates Deuteronomy 2 and has an eastern origin, since it finds no need to explain these names but does identify places west of Jordan.

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\(^{316}\) Extensive treatments of this chapter are given by Emerton (1971a, 1971b) and by Blum (1984: 462 n.5). Carr (1996:163-7) affirms that Genesis 14-15 is a late scribal insertion into the non-Priestly (Yahwist) narrative and he characterises the authors as semi-Deuteronomistic, in that they do not make the promise to Abraham dependent upon obedience.

\(^{317}\) I differ with Van Seters who argues for the literary creation of both major parts as campaign reports (excluding 18-20).

\(^{318}\) It is likely that Zumim equates with 'Zamzummim' (Deut 2:20). See Wenham (1987: 311). Note that Skinner (1910: 259) linked the name of Shinab, king of Admah (Gen 14:2) to Sanibu, the name of an Ammonite king in an inscription of Tiglath-Pileser IV.
A late redaction of the original chronicle is apparent in the list of five cities in v.2, which elsewhere in Tanakh appear only in pairs, except in Deut 29:23 and in Wisdom 10:6, and in the reference to Hazazon-tamar (v. 7), which occurs elsewhere in Tanakh only in 2 Chron 20:2. Only the names Sodom and Gomorrah are essential to the continuing narrative. The adaptation of the chronicle is evident in the disorder and repetition in v. 12 which reads, 'And they took Lot and his goods, the son of the brother of Abraham, and they went, and he dwelt in Sodom.' The second and the fourth phrases seem to be secondary insertions and the final 'and they went', makes the verse appear as an elaboration on v. 11. Moreover, in v.12 Abraham is mentioned as if he is already familiar while v. 13 identifies him as 'the Hebrew', as if he were not already in view.

This story of Abraham as a powerful Bedouin sheikh (14:13-16) also unites early and late elements of tradition. The identification of the Amorites as 'confederates' of Abraham reflects the ancestral era and his relationship with Abimelech (21:27; 26:28). The brothers' names have no particular function in the story and probably represent an ancient historical memory. Textual evidence of a later tradition is found in the name Dan (compare Laish,Josh 19:47; Judg 18:29) and in the unique Tanakh description of Abraham's men as 'the trained ones'. The verbal root (ḥanak) appears with this meaning only in Prov 22:6. The portrayal of Abraham as a military leader is very like that of Gideon and his 300 men (Judges 7).

The unique description of Abram as 'the Hebrew' (14:13) is typical of Tanakh references to Israelites from the viewpoint of another nationality. So LXX translates as perates, foreigner. Wenham (1987: 313) acknowledges that the term here suggests the possibility of a non-Israelite source. This may explain why the report does not recognise the torah which forbids Israel to make treaties with the people of Canaan (Exod 23:32; 34:12, 15; Deut 7:2).

In the light of the prophetic language of Genesis 19, which I identify below, I note here the language of the report that Abraham 'brought back' (Heb. šub, hiphil) Lot and his goods (Gen 14:16). The common term, šub, appears with the meaning of restoration first of Lot and then later of Sarah (20:14), Jacob (28:15) and Joseph (40:13; 48:21) and is used in the prophets to describe the

319 Other allusions to Genesis 14 appear in 2 Chronicles, namely the Lot tribes (20:1), Abraham (20:7) and the booty taken (20:25).

320 J. A. Emerton (1971b: 437) argues that this section is the older portion of the chapter, to which the campaign report was added.

321 From the same observation of the story, Emerton (1971b: 404, 438) concludes the names were added here and in v. 24 in the final redaction. Emerton's extensive analysis does not pay significant attention to the wealth theme that unites the chapter.

322 This term I discuss more fully in the following chapter.
restoration of Israel (Isa 10:21f; 51:11; Jer 12:15). Thus the story of the deliverance of Lot by Abraham links Lot with the patriarchs of Israel and alludes to the deliverance of Israel by God. The same two connections feature in Genesis 19.

Antiquarian references to Shaveh (v. 17) and to Melchizedek (v.18) point to ancient traditions behind the encounters Abraham has with the king of Sodom and the king of Salem. However, the first of these stories has evidence of the P tradition, both in references to the 'goods' (rekuš, vv. 11, 12, 16 and 21, see 12:5; 36:6) and to Abraham's solemn oath (v. 22). The Hebrew root, āšār (to make rich, Gen 14:23) and the conception of riches as a blessing of God (v. 23) are characteristic of the wisdom literature (e.g. Prov 10:22; Eccles 5:19).

In the story of Abraham and Melchizedek (Gen 14:18-20), the portrayal of blessing as a formal rather than a family matter also reflects a priestly viewpoint. However, the precise phrase 'bread and wine' (Gen 14:18) appears elsewhere in Tanakh only in secular contexts and expresses hospitality rather than religious symbolism. Reference to the deliverance of enemies into the hands of God's people is found elsewhere in Tanakh only in four Dtr texts, while the deliverance of God's people into other hands is most frequent. A northern tradition maintained by the Deuteronomists is also suggested by the verb 'to deliver', magan (Gen 14:20) which appears elsewhere in Tanakh only in Prov. 4:9 and Hos 11:8. The more common noun form, magen, meaning 'shield', appears in the Torah only in Gen 15:1 and Deut 33:29, a sign of the coherence of Genesis 14 and 15.

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323 The term rekuš appears in Gen 15:14 (perhaps derived from Ezra 1:4-6), Num 16:32, 35:3 and in several texts unique to the Chronicler: Ezra 8:21; 10:8. The one occurrence of this term in a Yahwist text (Gen 31:18) could well be the original Tanakh reference to the goods from which the P redaction took its queue. While the Yahwist elsewhere attends to the matter of wealth, such references are few and identify specific property. The metaphor of lifting up the hand occurs in Exod 6:8; Num 14:30; Isa 3:7; Ezek 20:5-42; 47:14; and Neh 9:15.


325 The epithet 'Most High God' also appears in Hos 11:7, but using the short form, ūd instead of ūdšen as in Gen 14: 20, 22. The role of Deuteronomists in the history of tradition of Genesis 14 is set forward by Astour (1966) and Carr (1996). Emerton (1971: 404-5) argues against the necessity of Astour's view but none of his countervaling arguments detract from the likelihood of a Deuteronomistic role.
My analysis indicates a distinction between the first two sections of the chapter and the rest, all now unified by reference to the theme of the goods.\textsuperscript{326} The opening sections draw on traditions from east of Jordan to present a story of the rescue of Lot and his goods.\textsuperscript{327} The mix of ancient and later sources shows that the each part of the chapter was compiled in the exilic period or later and is not the work of the Yahwist.\textsuperscript{328} The references to material possessions found in each portion of the preceding chapters from both J and P (12:5; 12:16 & 20; 13:2, 5, 6) explain the location of the explicit treatment of this theme in Genesis 14. Abraham's rejection of gifts from the king of Sodom reflects an ideology different from that of the Yahwist (12:16). The experience of Israel's deportation into exile among other peoples may explain the affirmation of dependence on the Most High God for her material security, set forth in the closing episode.

The rescue theme, the inclusion of Zoar among the five cities, and the fact that a link between Lot and Sodom is explicit only in v. 12, connecting the first two sections, suggests that the compilation of 14:1-16 corresponds to the unifying of the Lot and Sodom themes, as in 13:12 and Genesis 19. Note that a common hand is evident in vv. 11-12 and 16 where 'the goods (of Sodom)', 'Lot', and 'his goods' appear in the same unexpected order. The two opening scenes constitute an independent account with a quite simple plot structure, only one point of tension (14:12-13), one speech (in reported form) and a definite resolution.\textsuperscript{329} An adaptation of the story of the first two sections is evident in case of the king of Sodom who in the third section is alive and well although earlier he had fallen (14:10), which elsewhere implies death.\textsuperscript{330}

\textsuperscript{326} I consider little weight attaches to the view of Benno Jacob that the chapter constitutes a polemic against Sodom, and that it was to Sodom in particular that Abraham would not be indebted. The ideology of the final form appears to be quite independent of the geographical setting.

\textsuperscript{327} While we may agree with Kilian (1970: 24) that the final form of Genesis 14 is 'ein junger Midrasch', he need not distinguish it from surrounding chapters as 'completely impossible as an historical account'.


\textsuperscript{329} The author's use of an existing campaign report for another purpose means that close attention to the apparently historical elements in the opening section is unfruitful.

\textsuperscript{330} The Hebrew verb \textit{nagal}, 'to fall' has a broad range of meaning but where it appears without qualification, it consistently refers to death; see Exod 21:33; 32:28; Jos 8:25; Judg 3:25; 8:10; 12:6; 20:44; 1 Sam 4:10; 31:8; 2 Sam 1:4; 11:17; 21:22.
Genesis 18 Abraham and the messengers

The promise of a son for Sarah and Abraham in Genesis 18 makes this a pivotal chapter in the family narrative, following on from Genesis 12-13 and 16:1-6. Although Lot is absent from Genesis 18, the chapter is of relevance to the history of the Lot traditions because of the close parallels with Genesis 19 found in the opening scenes and because of the concern with Sodom later in the chapter. My analysis is based on the following structure of Genesis 18:\[331\]

| Scene One | 18:1-8 | The offer of hospitality to divine visitors. |
| Scene Two | 18:9-15 | The promise of a son and the disbelief of Sarah. |
| Scene Three | 18:17-21 | Divine soliloquies about Abraham and about Sodom |
| Scene Four | 18:23-33 | Abraham's dialogue with YHWH about justice. |

The close parallel between the opening scenes of Genesis 18 and 19 is apparent in nineteen details, including nine places (shown in bold type) where the same Hebrew root appears in each chapter:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative parallels between Gen 18:1-8 and 19:1-3</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. The time of day is specified (18:1; 19:1).</td>
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<tr>
<td>3, 4, 5. They encounter a solitary man, seated, at the entrance of the tent/city (18:1; 19:1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6, 7, 8. Both Abraham and Lot see the visitors, and run/rise, to meet them (18:2; 19:1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9, 10. Each one bowed himself, ... toward the ground (18:2; 19:1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The welcoming speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11, 12. Both spoke politely: 'my lords', ... 'I pray you' (18:3; 19:2).</td>
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<tr>
<td>13, 14. Both invite the visitors to 'wash your feet', and to rest/tarry (18:4; 19:2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Both refer to the guests continuing their journey later (18:5; 19:2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. The visitors accept hospitality (18:5; 19:3).</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Both texts indicate a feast (18:6-8; 19:3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Both specify bread and cakes (18:5-6; 19:3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Both end with the report: 'and they ate' (18:8; 19:3).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[331\] The interconnecting verses (18:16 and 22), which are themselves somewhat contradictory with respect to Abraham's movements, interrupt the sequence and appear to be secondary additions to connect the narrative to Genesis 19.
From these and other links between Genesis 18 and 19, Van Seters (1975: 215-6) concludes they are part of a unitary composition but he also notes (211) that it is remarkable that (supposedly) one author adapts the divine visitors theme in two different ways. The mixture of identical language and variations is not in itself sufficient to determine whether one author is responsible for both, only that the texts are not of independent origin. In this respect, I find decisive the fact that each part of the opening scene of Genesis 18 is comparatively more expansive than that of Genesis 19, namely the initial encounter (18:1-2; 19:1), the welcoming speech (18:3-5; 19:2) and the detail of food (18:6-8; 19:3). This greater detail does not add significantly to the portrayal of the warmest hospitality and would hardly have been added to the version in Genesis 19. Correspondingly, the nineteen points of similarity account for the entire plot of Scene One in Genesis 19, except for the initial rejection of hospitality, and all other details, except for the location in Sodom and the invitation into the house. This fact and the tight pattern of speeches and crisis in Genesis 19 (ABA\') that I elaborated in an earlier chapter indicate that the opening scene of Genesis 19 has been adapted from that in Genesis 18.

This conclusion is consistent with the results of the intertextual study above where I provide two similar charts of parallels between Genesis 19 and Judges 19. The level of correspondence between the second scenes in the two chapters is far greater than that between the opening scenes. However, in the case of the opening scenes, there are identical terms which are essential to the ongoing plot, namely the host as sojourner and references to the house and the street, which are central to the tension in the first scene of Genesis 19. This is not the case regarding the identical terms in Genesis 18 and 19, which relate to the quality of the hospitality but are incidental to the ongoing story. There is a case that both the first two scenes of Genesis 19 built upon Judges 19 but that Gen 19:1-3 also incorporated an adaptation to create a parallel with Genesis 18 in accord with the mutual treatment of Lot and Abraham found earlier.\(^{332}\)

Scene Two of Genesis 18 and Scene Three of Genesis 19 both develop from a word of revelation given by the messengers. Although these scenes have very little similar language and only one common Hebrew term of significance, they exhibit a remarkable similarity in plot structure, as shown in the table below.\(^{333}\)

\(^{332}\) In my view, against Van Seters (1975: 212), the opening report in 18:1a that the Lord appeared is hardly pre-Yahwist but rather a late redaction. This report somewhat spoils the story for the reader by explaining the encounter in advance, whereas in Genesis 19 the reader shares with Lot the discovery of the identity of the messengers as it emerges within the story.

\(^{333}\) Fretheim (1994: 474a) also notes the parallel structures, referring to the first, third and fourth of the above parallels.
Parallels of plot structure in Gen 18:9-15 and Gen 19:12-17

1. At the opening of each scene, the messengers' enquire after other family members, namely Sarah and Lot's sons-in-law (18:9a; 19:12).

2. The messengers make their announcements to Lot and Abraham without waiting for these other family members to appear (18:10; 19:13, 14b).

3. Both announcements, of birth and destruction, are brief words of revelation without formulaic elaboration.

4. Responding with disbelief, Sarah laughed (18:12); Lot's sons-in-law thought he was joking (19:14).


6. Both scenes close with the words/actions of the messengers (18:15; 19:16).

It is apparent that Scene Two of Genesis 18 embodies the same ABA' pattern evident in the four scenes of Genesis 19 but in a more elaborate form. The crisis is centred upon Sarah's laughter and follows a pattern of speeches that may be represented as (ABA)B(ABA)', where A represents the messengers and B, Abraham or Sarah. The messengers' opening speech (vv. 9-10b) is divided by Abraham's reference to Sarah in the tent (v. 9b), and their second speech (vv. 13-15), by Sarah's denial that she had laughed (v. 15a). As earlier, I take the more elaborate structure of the scene in Genesis 18 as an indication that it is the more original. This is consistent with the view that the son promise here, in an ordinary family setting and free of the formulaic character found elsewhere, is the earliest form of the promise tradition and perhaps the cornerstone of the entire ancestral narrative.334

The identification of two distinct soliloquies in the third section of Genesis 18 is indicated by the repeated phrase: 'And YHWH said' (18:17, 20), and confirmed by the difference in perspective between the two. 'What I am about to do' (18:17) takes for granted the destruction of Sodom while 'I will go down and see' (18:21) suggests the judgement is not yet decided.335 Furthermore, the latter remark presents YHWH looking down from above, as distinct from YHWH of Scene Two and of the

334 The promise story of Genesis 18 may represent an historicisation of an ancient myth regarding a miraculous birth. However, this myth is so widespread that one can hardly link Genesis 18 specifically to Greek myths in particular, especially where the promise of Genesis 18 is understood not as a reward for hospitality but as an act of grace.

335 Westermann (1985a: 285, 290) argues for the unity of the soliloquy but yet identifies a difference of form between the theological expressions of the first portion and the narrative style of the second. The second soliloquy reflects more closely the few other examples of soliloquy in Tanakh, all of which are Yahwist texts (Gen 3:22; 6:3, 7; 8:21; and especially 11:6-7).
following dialogue who functions on an earthly plane (18:13-14, 22). The second soliloquy (18:20-21) belongs to the tradition of 13:13 and 19:13, where the sin of Sodom is also presented in divine perspective and in superlative terms. By comparison, the first soliloquy avoids mention of Sodom and moves the focus away from judgement to the Deuteronomic concern with Abraham as the ideal of the father in later Israel. This new focus implies that the writer of the first soliloquy had already in view an existing tradition about the destruction of Sodom but, like Genesis 19, adapted it for another purpose.

The preceding observations undermine the view of Van Seters (1975: 212-15) who builds his case for the unity of Genesis 13, 18-19 on the unity of the soliloquies. The interest in Abraham as a model is entirely distinct from the family concern of the earliest ancestral traditions in Genesis 13. The same is true of Abraham portrayed in the dialogue as an advocate for a community, which reflects later theological concerns. The ten righteous, which would obviate the destruction of Sodom, corresponds to the minimum number required for a Jewish congregation in Judaism. Contrast Lot's speech to the messengers in 19:18-20 which has only personal significance. Since the dialogue makes no mention of Lot and only incidental reference to Sodom, it was probably independent of the story of Genesis 19. The three references to 'the city' and two to 'the place' suggest that an existing dialogue was later adapted to the case of Sodom.

**Genesis 19 Lot and Sodom**

The above analysis of Genesis 18 together with earlier intertextual studies accounts for the tradition history of much of Genesis 19, especially of the opening three scenes, as shown in the table below. The placement of the assault story in Scene Two, which interrupts the close parallel structure between Gen 18:1-15 and Scenes One and Three of Genesis 19, is evidence of the compiler's

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336 See references to the role of father (Deut 6:7, 32:46; Prov 2:1, 3:1, 6:20), the way of the Lord (Judg 2:22; 2 Kings 21:22; Prov 10:29) and to justice and judgement (Deut 16:18). These observations harmonise with the view of Carr (1996: 171).

337 Dentan (1963: 50) identifies elements of Wisdom tradition in the dialogue. Westermann (1985a, 286f) finds three indications of its post exilic setting, particularly the reference to God as judge of all the earth. However, the concern with the punishment of both the righteous and unrighteous appears in similar speeches by Moses (Num 14:13-24; Num 16:22). The issues of theodicy raised by this story are treated by Crenshaw (1970: 385).

338 In this respect, the dialogue contains not only a legitimatation of judgement but also a teaching about redemption, that redemptive power lies not with one or two righteous, such as Lot, but with a community. This and other aspects of the dialogue are treated by Blenkinsopp (1982) who sees the origin of the text in the postexilic context.
emphasis upon the deliverance theme. The fact of a pre-existing tradition about the cry of Sodom shows that Scene Two is not to be considered the basis for the destruction of Sodom but has an independent origin. Scene Two is also crucial to the way in which Act Two is connected to Act One in terms of the daughters.

### Intertextual links for Genesis 19.

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Of the four substantial scenes which make up the bulk of Act One, Scene Four stands out as lacking any extensive links to other Tanakh texts. I conclude that the dialogue of Lot and the messengers concerning Zoar was constructed by the compiler of Genesis 19. Others have been satisfied to note the etiological element in this scene, but the elements of etiology and itinerary which arise with the introduction of Zoar into the narrative are incidental to the central issue of Lot's negotiation with the messengers.399 This is apparent in the way the etiological comment (v. 22) is cut off from its natural link to v. 20 and by the fact that little is said about Zoar or what happens there. Most striking in this scene is the divine acquiescence through the messenger to Lot's special plea through which the compiler reinforces his presentation of Lot's standing before the divine. I will now show how the use of significant prophetic language in this scene establishes unique links between the rescue of Lot and the salvation of Israel. These appear in no less than five terms in Gen 19:10, 16 & 19, namely 'hand', 'compassion', 'loving kindness', 'magnify', and 'favour'.

The divine hand is a very common metaphor in Tanakh but generally refers to judgement and destruction. In the few texts which refer to a divine hand of salvation, the subject is always the people of Israel. Exodus and Deuteronomy refer eleven times to deliverance from Egypt by the hand

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399 Perhaps Van Seters (1975: 217, 220) is correct with the surmise that etiological notes about Zoar (and the Dead Sea, 13:10) represent the compiler's concern for historical evidences of the story.
of YHWH and this is echoed once in Jer 32:21.\textsuperscript{340} The second reference to hand (v. 16) refers to the human hands of Lot's family, which the messengers hold tight (Heb. ḫazaq, 'to bind fast'). This term may express purely human contact but has the same divine subject in Isaiah describing the deliverance of Israel: 'YHWH took hold of Israel from the ends of the earth' (Isa. 41:9). The two terms appear together in Isa 41:13 with reference to Israel and also in Isa 42:6 with reference to YHWH's chosen servant. The compiler of Genesis 19 drew upon prophetic metaphors of the deliverance of Israel and her intimate relationship to God to recount the story of Lot's deliverance.

The narrator's acknowledgement of the compassion of YHWH towards Lot (v. 16) is rare not only in form but in its language and ideology. The noun ḫemilah (compassion, from the verb ḫamal, to pity, to spare) appears here in Tanakh for the first time and elsewhere only in Isa 63:9, where it refers to the divine redemption of Israel. Even the verb form is not common and appears mostly in the prophets to express the divine attitude towards Israel. The majority of these references refer to God withholding compassion (Job 16:13; Isa 30:14; Jer 13:14; Ezek 5:11; Zech 11:6). The positive expression of divine compassion is limited to four post-exilic texts (2 Chr 36:15; Ezek 36:21; Joel 2:18; Mal 3:17).

The theme of divine mercy is restated in different terms in v. 19 through the testimony of Lot: 'you magnified your loving kindness (Heb. ḫesed) which you showed to me in saving-my-life'. Such references to the loving kindness of God toward a particular individual or group are also quite rare in Tanakh. Similar reports appear regarding Joseph (Gen 39:21), Israel in the wilderness (Exod 15:13), Ruth (Ruth 1:8; 2:20), David (2 Sam 22:51; 1 Kings 8:23), Ezra (Ezra 7:28) and Israel in exile (Ezra 9:9). These references show that Lot is in very fine company in regard to the Israelite tradition of divine mercy. The notion of YHWH's saving mercy toward Lot has added significance, first, for being absent from the stories of Abraham, and second, through the incorporation of the superlative 'made great' (19:19).\textsuperscript{341} This verb form, with God as subject, is found elsewhere only in Samuel's exhortation to Israel (1 Sam 12:24) and in Joel 2:21.

There is a further notable linguistic feature in Lot's speech, namely the close association of ḫesed with ḫem (divine favour; v. 19) which elsewhere in Tanakh appear together only in Moses' dialogue

\textsuperscript{340} Exod 13:3, 14, 16; 32:11; Deut 4:34; 5:15; 6:21; 7:8, 19; 9:26; 26:8. The combination in Gen 19:10 of verb and noun, 'stretched out their hand (singular)', appears only a few times in Tanakh with a divine subject and may express divine judgement (Exod 3:20; 2 Sam 24:16; Job 1:11; 2:5). However, it appears in prophetic texts (Jer 1:9; Ezek 8:3) with a positive meaning as in Genesis 19.

\textsuperscript{341} The term ḫesed occurs in the story of Abraham only with the meaning of loyalty, whether between persons (Gen 20:13; 21:23; 24:49) or between YHWH and Abraham (24: 12, 14, 27). It does not have the meaning of compassion.
with YHWH (Exod 33:19; 34:6-7) and in the prayer of Ezra 9:8-9. Since these two texts represent turning points in the covenant identity of Israel, reference to the favour and loving kindness of God towards Lot establishes a unique link between Lot and Israel as objects of divine intervention.

Turning to Scene Five, the reference in v.24 to both Sodom and Gomorrah indicates that the compiler used an ancient tradition, possibly one distinct from the prophetic tradition of overthrow in v. 25. The allusions to rain, fire and brimstone recall the story of Noah (Gen 7:21-23) and other acts of judgement in Tanakh but with no fixed tradition. 342 The report of v. 25 provides the only clear use in Genesis 19 of language attributed to the Yahwist, namely 'the inhabitants' (Gen 4:20; 13:7; 24:3) and 'growing plants of the ground' (Gen 2:5, 9; 3:17-18). The compiler provides this additional account of destruction to set up the total desolation of Lot and his daughters necessary to the plot of Act Two. The account of Lot's wife in Scene Six (v. 26) serves the same purpose. Although this report exhibits the motifs of looking back and of immobilisation found elsewhere in ancient mythology, its lack of connection to any other Tanakh tradition suggests that it has no ideological significance. 343

The Interlude (19:27-29) interrupts the story of Lot and his daughters and is quite independent of its context. Like Scene Five, the Interlude also unites distinct traditions of fire (19:27-28) and overthrow (19:29). The final image of 19:28, 'like a smoking furnace' uses Hebrew terms that elsewhere in Exodus and Leviticus refer to burning incense and to the descent of God on Sinai (Ex 19:18). This unique combination of words conveys the role of the divine in the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, as reflected in the dialogue of Genesis 18. Reference to the twin cities distinguishes this report from the preceding story in Genesis 19. 19:27-28 belongs to a stage of redaction when the dialogue was melded into Genesis 18 and 19.

Gen 19:29 appears as a secondary redaction in the chapter for several reasons. As to the literary evidence, first we find a new heading: 'it came to pass', then a summary of the entire story of deliverance and destruction. Second, the verse employs the unique noun form, hapekah, and mixes the language of destroy and overthrow, which terms are found separately in all other Tanakh

342 See Deut 29:23, Ps 11:6, Isa 30:33; 34:9 and Ezek 38:22. These varied references provide no basis for the conclusion of T. W. Mann, (1971) that brimstone and fire in Gen 19:24 should be read metaphorically.

343 A Greek parallel for the demise of Lot's wife is the disappearance of Eurydice when Orpheus looks around at her (Ovid, Met x. 51 and Virgil Ge. iv. 491). Aycock (1983) associates Lot's wife with Noah in the ark as examples of the myth of the immobilisation of a hero or villain, along with Isaac on the altar and Jesus on the cross. However, Lot's wife does not appear in an heroic or villainous role.
references to Sodom.\textsuperscript{344} Third, v. 29 makes no reference to Sodom but recalls the earliest tradition concerning the cities of the plain. Clear evidence of an haggadic redaction appears in the ideology of merit, 'God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out', which introduces a mediation not found earlier in the chapter and undercuts the \textit{hased} relationship established between Lot and the messengers.\textsuperscript{345} As elsewhere, the appearance of the divine name, God (\textit{elohim}), is inconclusive with regard to tradition history.\textsuperscript{346} The phrase, 'God remembered' is found in other P texts (Gen 8:1; 9:15-16) but the notion of invoking the memory of Abraham is characteristic of Dtr texts (Exod 32:13; Deut 9:27).\textsuperscript{347}

The unity of Act Two and Act One, evident in the use of elements of the story of Noah, is cemented by the irony in the reversal of relationship between Lot and his two daughters and the reversal of location regarding Zoar.\textsuperscript{348} This unity is consistent with the frequent appearance of drunkenness and sexual expression as motifs of the mythology of a new age, as described by Cheyne (1907: 307) and Jeremias (1911: Vol. 1, 271-2).\textsuperscript{349} Recognition of such a motif in these stories provides another reason for rejecting a moralistic reading of Genesis 19.

The daughters' unashamed naming of Moab and Ben Ammi, which proclaims their incestual origin, undergirds the opinion of von Rad (1972: 224) that the story represents 'an original Moabite

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\textsuperscript{344} Prophetic references consistently use only the term \textit{mahpekah}, 'overthrow'. The compiler of the Lot-Sodom story prefers the verb 'destroy' (Gen 13:10; 18:31, 32; 19:13, 14) but finally reverts to 'overthrow' (19:21, 25), for reasons that are not apparent.

\textsuperscript{345} The notion of haggadic redaction is advanced by Sandmel (1961). Fretheim (1994: 475b) notes that divine mercy and remembering are two different reasons for the rescue of Lot but does not recognise any conflict between the two.

\textsuperscript{346} The appearance of the term \textit{elohim} follows the consistent pattern of prophetic references to the overthrow of Sodom (Isa 13:19; Jer 50:40; Amos 4:11).

\textsuperscript{347} So in Gen 19:29, as earlier in Genesis 12-13, Rendtorff (1990: 17, 151) finds insufficient evidence of a separate P tradition but Carr (1996: 101) maintains attribution to P.

\textsuperscript{348} Blum (1984: 282) also acknowledges this unity.

\textsuperscript{349} The relationship of Noah and Ham reflects the same myth. The historicisation in Act Two of a myth of the origins of humanity is treated by Lods (1927) but rejected by Porter (1978: 130), who explores the relationship of the incest story to that of the births of Shachar and Shalim from an Ugaritic text.
tradition glorifying the mothers.\textsuperscript{350} Geographical references support this opinion, namely the reports: Lot 'dwelt in the hills' and 'he dwelt in the cave' (19:30), where the definite articles indicate locations known to the reader.\textsuperscript{351} Cave dwellers were well known in the east, namely the Horites of Mount Seir (from \textit{hor}, a hole; e.g. Gen 36:20-31; Deut 2:12), who excavated dwellings in the sandstone cliffs, as later did the Nabateans at Petra. The absence of other people in Act Two suggests a remote setting on the east of Jordan, since Abraham and others are in the high country on the west.

Apart from reference to the cave, Tanakh sets forward a compelling literary connection between Lot and the Horites. First, in Genesis 14:6 the Horites suffer with Sodom and Lot the attack from the northern kings. Perhaps the fleeing warriors of Sodom and Gomorrah found refuge in the hillside homes of the Horites (14:10). Second, Deut 2:22 accounts for the lands of the Lot tribes by referring to dispossession of the Horites by the Edomites. These literary connections are strengthened by the identification of one of the chiefs of the Horites by the name Lotan, which has the same triliteral root as the name Lot (Gen 36:20, 22, 29).\textsuperscript{352} An informed reader of Genesis 19 may consider the hills and the cave where Lot dwelt as also located in Edom, which is consistent with reports that Moabites took refuge within the northern border of Edom, close to Moab (Isaiah 15; Jeremiah 48).\textsuperscript{353}

Of particular interest in terms of tradition history is the final phrase of each of the last two verses of Genesis 19: 'unto this day' which here refers to the time of the editor.\textsuperscript{354} These references are

\textsuperscript{350} Here von Rad follows earlier commentators such as Gunkel (1964: 91, 218), as does Kilian (1970: 29-31) who notes that the location of the cave in the hills of Moab and the leading role of the elder daughter show this to be a Moabite (not Ammonite) tradition. Kilian concludes that Lot clearly belongs to the oldest form of the cave tradition.

\textsuperscript{351} Compare the flight of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah to 'a' hill (indefinite article, Gen 14:10).

\textsuperscript{352} T. K. Cheyne (1907: 307) considers Lotan to be the original Lot and accepts that Lot as father of Moab and Ammon was originally unconnected with Sodom. Noth (1948: 153) follows the same view.

\textsuperscript{353} Peake Pasha (1958: 11) reports that when Midianite raiders attacked, the settled people around Jordan took refuge in caves and strongholds. The possibility that the earliest Moabites may well have used the caves across their border with Edom is a further reason to discard the notion that Lot of the cave was originally ancestor of the pre-Moabite inhabitants, identified as the Emims. In any case, the Emims are distinguished from the Horites of ancient Seir (Deut 2:9-12).

\textsuperscript{354} Long (1968: 52) notes that the phrase 'unto this day' shows an interest that goes beyond the etymology of the tribal names to the question of tribal origins.
similar to fourteen other texts, almost all Deuteronomistic, which explain how certain communities came to be linked to particular places, of which the next example, Deut 2:22 further illustrates the link between Genesis 19 and Deuteronomy 2. Another example appears in the story of Rahab (Josh 6:25) which I have already noted as an intertext for the story of Genesis 19.355

3. The compilation and incorporation of Genesis 19

Building upon the studies of the two previous chapters and the above analysis in this chapter, I now argue that Genesis 19 has a tradition history distinct from that of the Yahwist responsible for Genesis 18:1-15 and the promise addresses to Abraham. While a number of studies now recognise the lack of homogeneity within the Genesis-Exodus material formerly attributed to the Yahwist, the possibility of a separate literary creation in Genesis 19 is hardly acknowledged.356 My view is supported by a number of considerations, first by my analysis of the special structure of speeches which dominate Act One of Genesis 19 with their distinct perspective upon the relationship of Lot and his visitors. The stories of deliverance in Genesis 19 present a developed characterisation of Lot, with high drama, complexity of speech and action, and a clear ideology which contrasts with the deliverance story of Genesis 14. Perhaps the compiler of Genesis 19 introduced Lot into the developing tradition of Genesis 14.357

Secondly, the intertextual study cast light on the secondary nature of Sodom in Genesis 19 and the dependence of the chapter on a) the story of Judges 19, and b) elements of catastrophe in the story of Noah. Comparisons between Genesis 19 and the intertexts clearly show the relative conciseness of the former and highlight the central purpose of the composer to place the deliverance of Lot by divine mercy at the forefront of the account. This purpose is also evident in the subtle choice of prophetic language in Scene Four, through which the compiler places Lot alongside some of the major figures in Israelite tradition and his divine rescue alongside that of Israel. I find support for

355 Childs (1963:292) concludes that the formula 'unto this day', when referring to the editor's time, is generally the personal witness of the historian added to an existing tradition. He considers that it is often earlier than the Deuteronomistic redaction.

356 Here I depart from the assumption of Carr (1996: 190-6) that Genesis 19 belongs to what he calls Proto-Genesis (that is the Yahwist strand identified largely by the promise tradition). Carr bases his conclusion on the presence in Genesis 19 of the Yahwist themes presented in 11:28-12:8. However, Carr's summary interpretation, that whatever Lot gets is by virtue of his connection to Abraham, takes no account of the _hesed_ and deliverance ideology in the chapter or of the agon structure I have demonstrated.

357 Emerton (1971b: 407) regards all references to Lot in Genesis 14 as secondary insertions, given the unusual grammar and repetitions of vv. 12 and 16.
such a reading in the observation of Leibowitz (1981: 122) that in the Torah, shades of emphasis are indicated in a subtle rather than overt manner. On this basis, certain word plays on the name Lot also reinforce the compiler's intention. Most notable is the Niphal form *malaš*, meaning 'to escape', which appears four times in Scene Four but nowhere else in the entire Torah. A similar root *palaš*, 'to deliver' appears in Gen 14:13 to describe another person who escaped from Sodom to bring Abraham news of Lot's capture. It is possible that these two roots help to explain the name Lot of which the etymology, according to Westermann (1985a: 133) is otherwise unknown.

Thirdly, I have shown above that the compiler of Genesis 19, Acts One and Two, had the opening scenes of Genesis 18 and the second part of the soliloquy in view. Given the close parallels between the opening scenes of Genesis 18 and 19, the transition to an urban setting highlights the development that takes place beyond the pastoral context of Genesis 12-13 and 18 and of the Torah as a whole. This suggests that the story of Lot's hospitality was an adaptation of the similar account about Abraham.\(^{358}\) The dialogue of Genesis 18 and the Interlude of Genesis 19 represent the final stages of redaction of the two chapters.\(^ {359}\)

The likelihood of a separate history of tradition for Genesis 19 is supported indirectly in an earlier study by Pfeiffer (1928) which departed from prevailing views and set out arguments for a non-Israelite collection (S) in Genesis that included Genesis 14 and 19 without the Abraham Interlude.\(^ {360}\) Pfeiffer's analysis was ahead of its time in recognising the importance of 'point of view' (71) and in distinguishing the Lot traditions from the work of the Yahwist.  Pfeiffer (72)

\(^{358}\) Westermann (1985a: 144) reaches similar conclusions, that 13:5-13 is the kernel of the Lot tradition and that Genesis 19, while connected to the previous chapter, has a different history. Blum (1984: 288) appears to be open to a similar view as he refers to the parallels between Genesis 18 and 19 and concludes that 'the dense and complex text of Genesis 19 was not formed independently of the Abraham traditions of Genesis 13 and 18'.

\(^{359}\) Note that in the dialogue, the Abraham tradition continues to focus on the insiders with its concern for the righteous, who might be unjustly treated like the undeserving wicked. This contrasts with the concern of YHWH for the undeserving Lot, who is treated as though he were righteous.

\(^{360}\) Pfeiffer (69) includes in S mythical and tribal traditions of an ethnographic kind which contrast with the Yahwist stories of the sanctuaries and of the ancestors as individuals. His pessimistic reading of both the human and divine in S is uncalled for, particularly as he acknowledges that such a reading does not account for the deliverance of Lot (and protection of Cain).
concludes that S has an Edomite origin, but his arguments apply equally to an alternative origin in Moab, since S is not hostile to Moab as Pfeiffer suggests.\footnote{Noth (1972: 152) also argues that non-Israelite east Jordanian traditions lie behind the story of Lot and he suggests Zoar as their possible locale. Noth returns to the suggestion of Skinner (1910: 236) that Beth Haran, opposite Jericho in the plain of Moab, was a place of worship of a local deity, perhaps worshipped by the people of Lot. However, I agree with Kilian (1970: 35) that Noth's hypotheses linking Haran with Beth Haran and Hebron with Sodom are scarcely justifiable. Van Seters (1975: 210, 220) concludes that the pre-Israelite history of Genesis 18-19 cannot be reconstructed.}

The incidental nature of references to Sodom in Genesis 18 and 19 suggests that the work of the compiler of Genesis 19 is especially shown in the unifying of the Lot and Sodom traditions.\footnote{So Vawter (1977: 239) concludes: '... there was little if anything that originally connected the Lot of the Sodom traditions with the nephew of Abraham of chapter 13'. Similarly Kilian (1970: 33) asserts that Lot was not originally linked to the Sodom traditions.} The compiler took ancient traditions of hospitality under threat and of primeval catastrophe and linked them in the person of Lot to independent traditions about a great destruction at Sodom and Gomorrah, in order to portray Lot as one who escaped destruction through divine mercy. Sodom is significant in this story not because of her offences but as a symbol of great destruction that highlights the greatness of divine mercy emphasised by the narrator. Kilian (1970: 32) suggests that the Sodom story provides not only for this ideological purpose but also an explanation for Lot being alone with his daughters in the cave, while emphasising at the same time that they are not descended from the sinners of Sodom whom they knew only as strangers (19:9).

My assessment that Genesis 19 is a distinct literary creation runs counter to a number of studies which assert that chiastic patterns show that the chapter is integrated into its context. These studies do not give sufficient attention to the structure of Genesis 19 alone and the variety of results of such studies is a sign of their inadequacy and lack of rigour.\footnote{A very detailed literary analysis by Letellier (1995) also treats Genesis 18 and 19 as a unit but acknowledges a complex of structural patterns within these chapters. Letellier does not acknowledge the affirmative elements of the Lot story nor the speech structure I have detailed and so does not find a difference of viewpoint between the two chapters.} For example, Loader (1990: 15) delineates a chiastic form encompassing Genesis 18 and 19 in full, in which Lot's deliverance from Sodom and escape to Zoar is at the centre. This pattern does not acknowledge the balance between
Scenes Two and Three of Genesis 19. Loader's exegesis in terms of divine justice overlooks the theme of mercy located at the very centre of his chiasm.\textsuperscript{364} Wenham (1994: 41) limits his chiasm to Gen 18:16-19:28 in which he identifies detailed parallels, none of which correspond to those of Loader's pattern.\textsuperscript{365} Despite the useful detail Wenham provides, his pattern has several weaknesses. The least satisfactory aspect of Wenham's palistrophe is found in the match between 19:4-11 and 19:14 which compares eight verses to one and creates a centre in 19:12-13 - the announcement of destruction. Wenham does not account for repeated references to the hands and to the daughters, which are major themes that surely must feature in any chiastic pattern.

A form critical analysis of Genesis by Coats (1983: 100) identifies an augmented palistrophe within Gen 11:27 - 22:19, centred upon the covenant of Genesis 15.\textsuperscript{366} Appropriately, the palistrophe encompasses a balance between Genesis 13-14 and 18-19, in which the Lot traditions appear. However, Coats places outside the palistrophe structure the stories of strife involving Sarah and Hagar and Abraham (16:1-14; 18:1-15; 21:1-21) but not the one story which explicitly develops from strife, the separation of Lot and Abraham (13:1-13, 18). If the strife reports are the most ancient, it is unlikely that a compiler would create a palistrophe using only some of the materials to hand. For this reason, Coats' structural analysis is inconsistent with his form criticism, and the palistrophe is therefore arbitrary.

Rendsburg (1986: 27) offers a rigorous treatment of chiasm in Gen 11:27-22:24 in which the common elements of Genesis 14 and 19 are matched. However, this proposal cannot explain the Lot traditions since Rendsburg does not match the incest scene at all. A similar proposal from Alexander (1982: 24) matches Genesis 13-14 on one side and Genesis 18-19 on the other, placing the incest scene against 13:2-18 in terms of family problems, which is not at all convincing. A most extensive proposal from Prewitt (1990: 77) covers all of Genesis 1-49 in seven sections of seven chapters in a zig zag pattern. However, in this case we have Genesis 18-19 set against Gen 10-11 in

\textsuperscript{364} Like other chiastic proposals, Loader's structure seems at points arbitrary and forced. While there is a common concern with family preservation in 18:1-16 and 19:30-38 (Loader's A and A'), this parallel fails to encompass the more obvious literary link at the opening of the two chapters around the theme of hospitality.

\textsuperscript{365} Brueggemann (1982: 162) treats 18:16-19:33 as a unit, but does not provide a chiasmic analysis.

\textsuperscript{366} Coats' analysis does not explain why the final chapters of the toledot of Abraham should be treated separately. It is also unconvincing in its treatment of Genesis 24 in one place as a death report concerning Sarah and later as a novella concerned with the outworking of the promised blessing.
which the only relevant match compares the accounts of Sodom and Babel, both of which contain a
divine soliloquy. With reference to chiasmic analyses, Prewitt (76) rightly affirms that ‘the value of
a reading indeed may become a matter of individual preference’. None of the above analyses can
establish that Genesis 19 is part of an integrated literary creation.

We may also approach the relationship between Genesis 19 and its context by a consideration of the
overall purpose of the Abraham and Lot stories. The distinct tradition of Genesis 19 is apparent in
the fact that the story of Lot is rather a cul de sac in the development of the major plot of the
ancestral narrative concerning the barren Sarah (Gen 11:30), the birth announcement of 18:10 and
narrative was to establish corporate identity for Israel in a time of dire threat. It is difficult to see
how Van Seters can encompass Genesis 19 within this function, where the affirmation and survival
of Lot and the identity of Moab and Ammon are the major concerns. Van Seters' (1975: 216)
treatment of Genesis 19 largely as a judgement story overlooks the distinct ideological interest of the
chapter in the ideology of mercy and deliverance attached to Lot that differs from the emphasis upon
the faith, righteousness and election of Abraham.

My analysis does not imply or depend upon an argument that the compiler of Genesis 19 has a view
radically different from the Yahwist. I noted earlier where the Yahwist account is sympathetic to
the perspective of Genesis 19 in respect of the universal concern and unconditional blessing in
Genesis 12:1-3, the mutual view of Lot and Abraham in Genesis 12 and 13, and the presentation of
Lot as first in line to receive the blessing imparted through Abraham. Nevertheless, the story of
Lot, in which the boundaries of covenant play no part at all, goes well beyond the universal in the
Yahwist tradition. The difference between Ishmael as a son of Abraham and Lot as one outside
Abraham's line, represents a fundamental gulf that the compiler of Genesis 19 crosses in building on
the Yahwist tradition. The story of Lot particularly carries forward elements in the pre-Yahwist
tradition of the stories of Hagar (Genesis 16; 21) where also YHWH responds to the cry of the
oppressed and promises posterity for Hagar through Ishmael.

I conclude that the final form of the story of Lot, excluding the Abraham traditions found in the
Interlude of Gen 19:27-29 and in the royal encounters of Gen 14:17-24, is the work of a compiler

367 On the basis of the conventional source criticism of the ancestral narrative, Bloom (1986: 1, 9)
offers a reading of the Yahwist as almost too radical to be comprehended by later redactors of
Tanakh in that J presents 'a YHWH who will not dwindle down into the normative Godhead of the
Jews, Christians and Muslims'. Certainly the Jacob traditions from the Yahwist contribute to
Bloom's reading but in my view, the deliverance of Lot and the dialogue of Genesis 19, Scene Four
(from another hand) contains the most radical ideology of the entire ancestral narrative.
subsequent to the Yahwist. In regard to plot, this work assumes the kinship relationship between Lot and Abraham (Genesis 13) and the role of Abraham in rescuing Lot (Genesis 14). The precise genealogical relationship of Lot and Abraham, which is expressed differently in J and P texts, may be a secondary detail of the basic kinship relationship. The compiler's main literary work appears in the way three rescue stories are linked to the account of the origins of the Lot tribes and in the dialogue over Zoar (19:17-22), all of which present an eirenic view of Lot and his descendants.

In my view, the closing account of Gen 19:37-38, namely that the Moabites and Ammonites traced their descent from Lot, is both the climax and the foundation of the compiler's work. Genesis 19 is the sole source of this genealogy. Since an actual line of descent from Lot to the Moabites and Ammonites of the settlement era of Israel is entirely lacking in Tanakh, it is necessary to allow that this genealogical link is a social construction from a later perspective. However, the importance of this link in our reading of the Lot traditions stands independently of whether it was a pre-existing tradition for the compiler. In harmony with my view, Kilian (1970: 23, 28) follows Noth in making the case for several stages of tradition history regarding Lot, in which were linked Lot's roles as the partner of Abraham, as father of Moab and Ammon, as one saved from Sodom, and as cave dweller. The likelihood of such stages of development is consistent with my argument that the compiler of Genesis 19 made deliberate use of existing traditions to present an ideology through the story of Lot that differs from that of the surrounding chapters.

4. The Deuteronomists and the Lot Traditions

My analyses have led to a conception of the tradition history of Genesis 19 that is entirely different from the conventional view. I now consider the evidence of the role of Deuteronomists in the incorporation into Tanakh of the Lot traditions. As there is no longer a consensus on the relative status of the J and D redactions in Genesis, I will first establish a scenario for the Yahwist work. With Van Seters (1992: 328-333) we may characterise the Yahwist as an antiquarian historiographer and a creator of a national history. However, I cannot agree with Van Seters (1992: 330-1) that J was created in exile as a prologue to the Deuteronomist. His view is not consistent.

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368 My path to this conclusion conforms to the strategy of Schmid (1977: 39) that literary hypotheses should always be tested by their theological implications.

369 Van Seters (1995: 260; 332) rejects the notion of Blum (1990: 273-297) that the ancestral narrative involved a series of compositional stages, comparing it instead to works of Greek historiography. However, De Vries (1987: 501) rejects the implication of Van Seters' analysis that there was a 'short period of frenzied redactional activity' in Israel and asserts that there were significant written records in Israel prior to the rise of the monarchy.
with the evidence of Deuteronomistic elements in texts of interest to this study.\textsuperscript{370} Furthermore, it is difficult to accept the conclusion of Van Seters (1992: 270) that Abraham represents the democratization of a royal ideology for an exilic context, since the universal element of the promised blessing (Gen 12:2-3) is already present in the earliest Jacob traditions (28:14).\textsuperscript{371}

In my view, more attention should be paid to social geography in weighing the evidence of traditions in Genesis, particularly to the tension between the southern and northern kingdoms of Israel. Apart from the few decades of the united kingdom, the southern kingdom of Judah was remote from the commercial and international culture of the north and its natural rejection of the more liberal attitude of the north towards the cult of YHWH is seen in the stories of king Jeroboam and other northern kings. After the division of the kingdom in the tenth century BCE, the survival of tiny Judah as distinct from Israel became a crucial issue, which I argue began to generate the Yahwist historiography in support of national identity.\textsuperscript{372} Judah became especially vulnerable following the Assyrian devastation of the north in 721 BCE and the need to sustain her identity correspondingly

\textsuperscript{370} First, the literary evidence shows that Genesis 14 predates the text of the Moab covenant that begins and ends Deuteronomy: a) the explanations in Deut 2:10-12, 20-22 are not found necessary in Gen 14:2, 5-6; b) the four city tradition of Deut 29:23 is later than the twin city tradition of Gen 14:11 and 19:24, 28. The work of the Yahwist in Genesis is presumably even earlier than the Moab covenant text. Second, in treating the land ideology of Deut 2:9-10, 17-21 as a conquest tradition, supposedly superseded by a Yahwist promise tradition (Gen 12:7; 13:15), Van Seters (1992: 238-9) ignores the element of divine gift in these texts and the fact that divine gift and human conquest are not mutually exclusive to the Deuteronomist (2:12).

\textsuperscript{371} Here I accept with McEvenue (1994) the integrity of Gen 28:10-22, against Blum who excises 28:13-14a as late merely because it refers beyond the horizon of the surrounding pericope.

\textsuperscript{372} This is also the view of Carr (1996: 170-6, 226-8). Here we meet a fundamental divide in scholarly conceptions of the Yahwist work, as to whether it was the product of the glorious Solomonic era or of later times of crisis. Coote and Ord (1989: 5, 33, 100, 301) build their case for a pre-Solomonic date on the fact that Abraham and Lot are Bedouin figures, supposedly intended to affirm solidarity between the Bedouin of the Negev and the Israelites of David's kingdom. However, such solidarity might have been an even greater concern for the divided kingdom of Judah.
greater.\textsuperscript{373} This need may explain the distinctive use by the Yahwist of the divine name, YHWH (in narrative passages).\textsuperscript{374}

The above scenario concerning the Yahwist material can also account for the prominence of the Abraham traditions from Hebron in the ancestral narrative, given that references to Jacob traditions from the north dominate in Tanakh outside of Genesis. As Van Seters (1975; 310-11) states, the tradition of Abraham became a focus of corporate identity for Israel (or rather Judah) as a chosen people. The exaltation of Abraham over both Jacob and Moses is a striking feature of later Jewish tradition, as I elaborate in the following section of this chapter. Since the ancestral narrative is equally committed to both Abraham and Jacob traditions, I conclude that the Yahwist began the change in emphasis from Jacob to Abraham and adapted some Jacob traditions to portray Abraham.\textsuperscript{375}

I have argued that the first two scenes of Genesis 14 and the main story of Lot in Genesis 19 represent a redaction subsequent to the Yahwist literature surrounding them. My analysis has also identified both Deuteronomistic and Priestly features in Gen 19:29 and in the final scene of Genesis 14, which texts I argue are subsequent to the main body of the Lot story. The two-fold destruction of Gen 19:24-25, where only Sodom and Gomorrah are mentioned, appears to have arisen prior to the four-city tradition of Deut 29:23 but later than the standard prophetic tradition of overthrow. These observations suggest the compilation of the Lot tradition in Genesis 19, Acts One and Two, took

\textsuperscript{373} Steinberg (1993: 143, 147) recognises the function of stories in Genesis to establish identity for the Jews but relates this to the returning exiles (Ezra 2:59-63), not to the pre-exilic community.

\textsuperscript{374} For this reason, contrary to Friedman (1993: 13), the possible existence of a distinct northern Elohist tradition does not imply that J was from the era of the united kingdom.

\textsuperscript{375} This conclusion finds support in the analysis by Carr (1996: 226, 303-5) who argues that the Jacob and Joseph traditions originally legitimated the northern kingdom but were adapted to the needs of Judah after 722 BCE. My conclusions run counter to those of Moberly (1992a: 84-6) who asserts that the ancestral narrative (J) presents authentic pre-Yahwism. Of the seven points he presents in evidence, four depend on argument from silence. The open and inclusive monotheism and the religious activity without priestly mediation found in the narrative certainly contrast with Mosaic Yahwism but probably existed in parallel with it over the centuries. Furthermore, these significant differences between the Abraham and Moses traditions do not obscure the strong element of particularity that characterises the divine call in both traditions and diminishes the strong contrast that Moberly has asserted.
place within the broad period during which the Deuteronomistic traditions were assembled. Here I lean to the second of four paradigms identified by Boorer (1989: 198, 202) regarding the relation of JE and D, the view that independent traditions were later connected, thus preserving contrasting ideologies.

The above chronological arguments are well supported by textual and ideological evidences for a Deuteronomistic role in Genesis 19. My conclusions here are in harmony with the approach of Schmid (1977: 36) who builds upon the work of Rendtorff and asserts that the patriarchal narrative structured by the promises is not so much augmented under Deuteronomistic influence but received its final form in connection with the Deuteronomistic process of tradition. I first summarise earlier observations I made concerning the interest of Deuteronomy in the traditions of Moab and Ammon.

1) In Tanakh, specific mention of Lot appears outside of Genesis only in Deut 2:9, 19 and in Ps 83:8, in both cases to identify Moab and Ammon corporately as 'the sons of Lot'.

2) Deuteronomy 2 contains unique historiographical records concerning the possession of their lands by Moab and Ammon which provide a sequel to the birth stories of Gen 19.

3) Deuteronomy 2 conveys an understanding of Moabite and Ammonite lands as divine gift, possessed by the grace of God just as in the case of Israel (9:1-6). The Deuteronomist deliberately affirms for Moab and Ammon what is already assumed for Edom.

4) Deuteronomy 23 has a unique law that excludes Moab and Ammon from the congregation of Israel.

5) Deuteronomy 34 shares with Genesis 13 and 19 a reference to Zoar and has thematic elements concerning the death of Moses which closely parallel the story of Lot.

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376 Compare the conclusion of Pfeiffer (73), which also supports a later dating, that his proposed Edomite source, S, containing the Lot traditions, was incorporated in the final redaction of the Torah in the fourth century BCE, subsequent to P.

377 Boorer (1989: 204) characterises the corresponding outlook concerning the land as ambiguous, incorporating hope and no hope, and grappling with a conception of divine freedom. The Deuteronomic affirmation of Moabite and Ammonite lands is consistent with this paradigm.

378 In the light of the sexual elements in the exclusion laws, Mayes (1979: 317) concludes from the lack of reference to the incest story of Genesis 19 that the compiler of Deut 23:1-9 was unaware of that story. However, we may equally suppose that the compiler was aware of the incest story but considered the issue of hospitality far more important. Such a supposition is consistent with the reading of Genesis 19 I have offered and with the possibility of a Deuteronomistic hand in that chapter.
The above references are matched by evidence of Deuteronomistic interest within the story of Lot, which I have noted at earlier points.

1) Antiquarian details in Gen 14:1-9 correspond to those in Deuteronomy 2.

2) Abraham's campaign to rescue Lot may reflect the Deuteronomic acknowledgement of Moabite and Ammonite territory east of Jordan.

3) The concern of Genesis 19 with hospitality and the stranger outside of covenant is especially Deuteronomic.\textsuperscript{379} A unique aspect of the character Lot is his role on both sides of this torah observance.

4) The shame that the men of Sodom bring upon Lot's house by their sexual assault (Gen 19:4-5) recalls the implied shame upon Moab and Ammon by their association with those who are sexually inadequate and those of illegitimate birth (Deut 23:1-3).

5) The combination of judgement on Sodom from above and below (19:24-5) echoes the reference in Deut 29:23.

6) Deuteronomic interest is suggested by a number of infrequent Hebrew terms in Genesis 19 which also appear in Deuteronomy, namely the verb 'to cleave' (Deut 28:60), the 'street' (Deut 13:16), the verbs 'to perish' and 'to put to death' (Deut 32:23 & 39), and the verb 'to humble' (Deut 21:14; 22:24, 29).\textsuperscript{380}

The fact that references in Deuteronomy encompass both eirenic and hostile views of Moab and Ammon calls for some explanation. It would be convenient to attribute the contrast between Deuteronomy 2 and 23 to the difference between the core and the later parenthetic chapters of

\textsuperscript{379} The torah of Deuteronomy is distinguished from that of Exodus by the quantity and quality of its references to strangers living among the Israelites. Instructions in Exodus are limited to the protection of strangers (22:21) and their right to Sabbath rest (20:10; 23:12). Only Deuteronomy incorporates strangers with orphans and widows as deserving of particular care (eleven references). These references allow the strangers to share in the tithes and offerings (14:29; 16:11, 14; 26:12-13) and to glean in the harvest of the fields, the olives and the grapes (24:19-21). Most notable is the unique reference to the divine love for the stranger and the concomitant instruction to Israel to emulate that love (10:18-19).

\textsuperscript{380} The text of Hosea 11:7-8 may provide a further indication of a Deuteronomistic hand in the stories of Lot, assuming the emerging Deuteronomic tradition arose in northern Israel. As I noted in the previous chapter, these verses contain four allusions to Genesis, namely 'the most High', the verb 'to deliver', 'Admah and Zeboiim', and the verb 'to overthrow', all of which appear in association with the Lot traditions.
Deuteronomy, which I discussed in connection with the Sodom tradition in Deuteronomy 29. However, there are several signs in Deuteronomy 23 that it is later than the surrounding core of Deuteronomy so that both views of Moab and Ammon presented in Deuteronomy are relatively late.381

This observation leads to a factor that is crucial to my entire study and to the scholarship concerning the history of Tanakh traditions, namely that many Tanakh texts do not conform to one viewpoint or ideology but encompass a dialectic. In her study of Jewish exegesis, Leibowitz (1981: xxxi) affirms 'The Torah by its very nature demands multiple interpretation. Anything less does not do justice to its terms of reference and texture'. Failure to acknowledge this fundamental principle has resulted in analyses which are too simplistic.

The presence of a dialectic in Deuteronomy between the covenants of Horeb and Moab is elaborated by Olson (1994) who argues that Deuteronomy is a uniquely comprehensive theological work within Tanakh.382 Such a dialectic is also consistent with the Deuteronomistic record of both conflict and co-operation between the royal houses of Israel and Ammon within a kinship relationship, which I established in my opening chapter. My reading of distinct ideological perspectives in Genesis 18 and 19 recognises that a dialectic also appears within the ancestral narrative and likewise results from Deuteronomistic influence.383

In all three settings - Genesis, the Court history and Deuteronomy - the presence of dialectic reflects the concern with social boundaries, which was a challenge to Israel throughout the long development of her sense of identity as a people of God somehow distinguished from other peoples.

381 The way Ammon is included with Moab in the accusation of the lack of hospitality and in the hire of Balaam (Deut 23:4) is uncorroborated and reflects the lack of distinction in some later prophetic texts. Reference to the love of God active in the episode with Balaam (23:5) represents a development beyond the similar report in Joshua 24:9 where divine love is not mentioned. The rare use of the alternative designations 'Moabite' and 'Ammonite' (23:3) could be post-exilic although the singular makes this inconclusive. The change of usage is clear as between 2 Kings 23:13 and Ezra 9:1, both of which refer to the idols of Moab and Ammon. Mayes (1979: 316) discusses the composite nature of Deut 23:4 and concludes that reference to exclusion until 'the tenth generation' was a qualification of the earlier 'forever'. This suggests the latest redaction of Deuteronomy 23 was more sympathetic to Moab and Ammon and thus more in harmony with Deuteronomy 2.

382 Carr (1996), who makes no reference to Olson's study, sustains the same viewpoint.

383 From a contemporary Jewish perspective, Levenson (1993a: 56) affirms that Jewish sacred texts are 'internally argumentative' and therefore tolerant of theological polydoxy and not conducive to the kind of biblical theology that seeks a centre.
This concern is explicit in Deuteronomy 23 which, in the scheme identified by Olson, is part of a 'midrash' on the Sixth Commandment prohibiting adultery (Deut 5:18). Both the hostile and eirenic traditions of interstate relationships express the significance of boundaries. It is therefore not remarkable that evidences of the Deuteronomists in the ancestral narrative also treat geographical and social boundaries and are not limited to a narrow nationalist emphasis.

It remains to suggest an occasion for the compilation of the unitary work comprising Acts One and Two of Genesis 19. We must account on the one hand for the ideology of deliverance and the fact that prophetic language is used regarding God's rescuing hand, as also regarding the overthrow of Sodom. On the other hand lies the interest in and eirenic treatment of Moab and Ammon, which suggests a stable political situation in Judah. These features, which do not appear to have been weighed in the commentaries, point to a setting in the Persian period following Israel's return from exile. I discussed in the opening chapter how the books of Ezra and Nehemiah portray the Ammonites as an influential group in Judah at that time. This was also a time when the strict policy of Nehemiah in Judah was opposed by the Samaritans of the northern kingdom who had been responsible for the government of Judah. One would expect a policy favourable to Ammon and Moab to have a northern origin.

The location of Genesis 19 within the Persian period resonates with the argument of Brett (1998), based on traditions in Genesis apart from Lot, that among the Jews of that period were some who held an inclusive attitude towards the people and religion of Israel's Canaanite neighbours. Brett relates this attitude to land issues in the Persian period and to opposition to the reform ideology of Ezra and Nehemiah. The compilers of Genesis 19 presumably represent a group with an inclusive viewpoint, that maintained the strongest possible sense of kinship with their eastern neighbours. Such a reading of Genesis 19 is consistent with the view of Crusemann (1996), that the genealogical system of Genesis undermines ethnocentrism. In the story of Lot, which identifies the one mercifully delivered from Sodom as the father of Moab and Ammon, I see the seeds of a pluralism in Israelite theology which I will elaborate in the following chapter.

5. Abrahamism and the Lot traditions

The scriptures of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, which embody in new ways the traditions of Genesis, provide a further window upon the history of those traditions. Here I draw examples from my earlier thesis (Tonson: 1987) which shows that privileging of the character, Abraham, has led to a limiting intratextual reading of Lot and other traditions within each of the three religions. So commentaries upon the ancestral narrative are largely determined by the themes of promise and

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384 Coats' conclusion (1985: 128-9) that the Lot story represents the view of the Yahwist that separation from Abraham leads to a sad fate, fails to account for either of these features.
blessing expressed in the story of Abraham and Sarah and by the virtues of faith and righteousness attached to Abraham. I now provide a brief account of the privileging of Abraham in Tanakh traditions outside of Genesis, in Second Temple Jewish traditions, in the New Testament and in the Qur'an. This account provides a context for assessing the privileging of Abraham already present in Genesis.

The scarcity of reference to Abraham in Tanakh outside of Genesis is surprising. Of the 42 references, more than half refer to all three patriarchs in relation to the covenant. Only eleven texts bear traditions specific to Abraham, mostly recalling Abraham as father of Israel and as a channel of God's promises. By way of comparison, references to Jacob and to Moses are, in both cases, about three times as numerous, although those referring to Jacob mostly refer to Israel corporately. In particular, references to the God of Jacob appear 19 times, while the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob appears 7 times and the God of Abraham alone appears only once (Ps 47:9). The lack of reference to Abraham in the prophetic books is a sign that his importance in Genesis may not represent the earliest traditions. There is an explicit recognition of Abrahamicism in Ezekiel 33:23ff which rejects the claim Israel made to the land in the name of Abraham.

The references to Abraham beyond Genesis exhibit three novel features which are signs of developing tradition. Most striking are invocations of the name of Abraham in prayer, twice as friend of God, (Deut 9:27; 2 Chron 20:7; Isa 41:8) which represents the merit ideology of Gen 19:29. Equally rare is the description of Abraham as the rock (and Sarah the quarry) from which Israel was hewn (Isa 51:1-2), a metaphor applied elsewhere only to YHWH (Isa 17:10). A third feature to note is the rare reference to Abraham as a patronymic for Israel (Isa 29:22; Mic 7:20). The former verse refers to Abraham to represent those 'redeemed' by YHWH where elsewhere the redeemed are always referred to as Jacob or as Israel. Although Jacob and Moses feature more frequently than Abraham in the Tanakh traditions, they do not receive the same development. I have found only one example for each. We meet Moses as intercessor in Jer 15:1, and in Malachi 1:2 we have a statement of God's love for Jacob over Esau, which carries a patronymic significance rather than a personal one.

The elevation of Abraham is especially apparent in Talmud traditions. I will allude to four examples, the first of which I noted above as an historicisation of myth: the story of Abraham as the endangered baby portrays him as one with a divine mission (Deut R. 2:27). On the basis of his intercession for Sodom, Abraham was considered able to make effective prayer for the barren, the sick and ships at sea (Gen R. 39:11). In the Testament of Abraham (v.14) the prayer of Abraham

385 The eleven texts are Josh 24:2-3; 1 Chron 1:27-28; 2 Chron 20:7; Neh 9:7; Ps 47:9; 105:42; Isa 29:22; 41:8; 51:2; 63:16; Ezek 33:24.
saves a soul from final judgment. The ultimate expression of the status of Abraham is found in a commentary from R. Judah (Gen R 30:10) which asserts that if Noah fell in the dark, he would call upon God to shine a light for him, but if God were to fall, God would call for Abraham to shine a light.\footnote{386} Abraham eventually attains cosmic significance in the tradition that God created the heaven and the earth for Abraham's sake, which is based on the common numerical value of the Hebrew terms Abraham and berësit (in the beginning, Gen 1:1; Ps. J.; Gen 14:19).

The cosmic role of Abraham as heavenly gate keeper also appears in the New Testament parable of Dives and Lazarus (Luke 16:22). The New Testament has 53 references to Abraham in particular but only 10 to Jacob. Specifically, five texts refer to the God of Abraham but only one to the God of Jacob. Abraham also appears more frequently than Moses in both Gospels and Epistles.

The Qur'an also carries forward many of the Jewish traditions, both biblical and extra-biblical, in which Abraham is already established as a pre-eminent figure. Abraham is a witness to YHWH of creation (21:57-67), a man of power and insight, of the elect, the best (38:45-47). Under opposition from Jews (and Christians) Muhammad, like Paul, finds a basis for legitimation in the figure of Abraham. Islam ('submission') is described as the religion of Abraham (Surah 2:130; 12:38; 16:123-4) for he submitted to the will of God in offering his son (37:103). Muhammad's claim that prayer and alms giving, two of four central devotions of Islam, were first revealed to Abraham (Surah 21) recalls the attribution of circumcision to Abraham (Genesis 17). A contrary tradition appears in the reports that Ishmael, not Isaac, was prepared by Abraham for sacrifice and that worship at the Kabah in Mecca was founded by Abraham and Ishmael.

The status of Lot is also developed in Jewish tradition. The affirmation in Wisdom 10:6 of Lot as righteous is magnified in Sifre 81a which describes Lot as so righteous that only God could have supplied the wine needed to overcome his scruples regarding incest.\footnote{387} Lot is also recognised as an intercessor who pleads all night for Sodom and saves Zoar through his prayers (Lev R. 23:9). However, the Mishnah and Talmud make much more of the prayer power of Abraham than of Lot even though Abraham's prayer for Sodom is denied while Lot's prayer for Zo'ar is granted. It is apparent that the Lot tradition has developed favourably, a point overlooked by commentators of a moralistic persuasion.\footnote{388} The New Testament makes only two references to Lot and does not add to Jewish tradition. Luke 17:28-9 portrays Lot in terms of Noah, adding the admonition; 'Remember

\footnote{386} This commentary on Gen 6:9 exalts Abraham above Noah.

\footnote{387} The Genesis Apocryphon (20:22) gives a positive account of Lot as the one who tells Pharaoh to restore Sarah to Abraham. See Fitzmeyer (1971: 128).

\footnote{388} By way of comparison, the Sodom traditions are elaborated negatively in Jewish tradition (See Ginzberg, 1937:245-249).
Lot's wife' (17:32). 2 Peter 2:7-8 maintains the view of Lot as a righteous man, daily troubled by the sights and sounds of the evil of Sodom. 389

Of the three mid-eastern religions, Islam provides the most affirmative view of Lot. In his departure from Haran, Lot's motivation is the same as Abraham's, to whom he said: 'I am a fugitive unto my lord' (Surah 29:26-33). Lot also appears as a prophet of the true God, 'preferred, chosen, guided', the last in a list of seventeen names, mostly from Jewish tradition (Surah 6:86). He is most eloquent in his appeal to the men of the city: 'Come not to males, cut not the road for travellers, commit no abominations in your meetings' (Surah 6:86; 37:133-138).

In my view, the treatment of Abraham and Lot traditions in the later scriptures informs our understanding of the history of traditions found in Genesis, in two ways. As to form, the mishnaic tradition of recounting a variety of interpretations offered on a text or a point of law by earlier authorities is evidently not only a literary quality but also an element of the theological mentality of the rabbis. This phenomenon, first indicated in Deuteronomy, leads one to expect a variety of interpretations within the Genesis traditions of Tanakh such as I have affirmed regarding Abraham and Lot. As to content, the long history of traditions in Genesis can hardly be considered free of the tendency in Jewish tradition to magnify the figure of Abraham. In the mundane realm, witness the distinct change of role for Abraham in Genesis 14 from pastoralist to sheik, matched by a clear change in language to describe his household: herdmens (13:7) gives way to armed men (14:14). 390

The enhancement of Abraham traditions for ideological purposes is especially significant in the introduction to the story of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3), which bears signs that it is a literary and ideological creation distinct from the narratives it introduces. The blessing and curse formula here unites traditions found separately and in narrative form in the stories of Jacob (Gen 27:29; 28:14-5), using different language for curse, and adds an identification of YHWH as the originator of blessing and curse (Gen 12:3a). The opening blessing and curse also appears separately in the Balaam oracle of Num 24:9, with exactly identical Hebrew forms although in reverse order. This observation

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389 The affirmation of Lot in early Christian tradition is apparent in a reference to the church of St. Lot marked upon the Madaba map in the vicinity of Zoar. See Crocker (1992), who links this map reference to a cave site where the remains of a sixth century CE Byzantine monastery and earlier church have been found.

390 The MT of Gen 14:14 has the verb ruq (hiphil), 'to cause to draw swords', hence, in English translations, 'armed'. Westermann (1985a: 200-1), guided by LXX and Sam, gives the alternative from dig, to muster, but this also has a military aspect. Josephus' Antiquities, Bk 1, Ch. 7 refers to a military conception of Abraham.
strengthens the case that the Jacob/Balaam form is the more original. Elsewhere in the Torah the blessing and curse theme is nowhere linked to Abraham but rather to obedience. Development is also apparent in the absence of a physical and temporal setting for the divine announcement to Abraham, which is remarkable because a new narrative begins here and because similar reports about Isaac and Jacob have clear narrative settings (Gen 26:1-5; 28:14-5). The announcement also lacks the promise 'I will be with you', which appears as a standard theme elsewhere.

Vawter (1977: 177) notes that the promise of renown (Gen 12:2) is not given to the other patriarchs, and that it may be borrowed from the liturgy of kingship (Psalms 2, 45, 72, 89). Similarly, Westermann (1985a: 230) finds that the language of the monarchy era contributed to the idealisation of Abraham both as father of faith and object of covenant (Genesis 15). The understanding of Abraham's prophetic role as one privy to divine intention (Gen 18:17-19) reflects the conception of Amos 3:7. Abraham is no longer just an example of faith but becomes a teacher of righteousness and justice. The idea that God remembered Abraham (Gen 19:29), in my view, represents a development beyond the understanding that God remembered his covenant (Exod 2:24, 6:5; Lev 26:42). In this light, the notion that God delivered Lot when he remembered Abraham need not be seen as diminishing Lot but counting him as virtually within the covenant.

The above observations show that the Lot traditions are to be read with an awareness of their formation against the background of the strong tendency towards Abrahamicism in the propagation of Jewish traditions. Recognition that Abrahamicism is inherent in Tanakh and subsequent commentary to the present day goes to the heart of the recent debate on Biblical Theology as expounded by Tucker (1990: 4) since it represents first a particular choice of materials (traditions) and then a particular choice of questions asked of those materials. Materials concerning Abraham have been chosen for theological reflection by writers who believed that religious adherents of their own time

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391 An analysis by Van Zyl (1960: 11) of linguistic elements in the Balaam oracles indicates their relative antiquity.

392 The theme of divine blessing considered alone appears more frequently but outside of Genesis there is no specific link between the blessing theme and the character Abraham. The majority of references to Abraham in Deuteronomy refer to the divine promise of land.

393 This promise appears in relation to Isaac (Gen 26:3) and Jacob (28:15; 31:3), Moses (Exod 3:12) and Joshua (Josh 1:5), Gideon (Judg 6:16) and Solomon (1 Kings 11:38)

394 Abraham is explicitly identified as a prophet (nabi) in a divine warning to Abimelech (Gen 20:7). This is unexpected, since within the story of Abraham's response to Abimelech, his role is more that of a priest (20:17).
may also be the objects of divine promise like Abraham. The radically distinct emphasis of Genesis 19 over against the Abrahamism of the ancestral narrative suggests a quite deliberate presentation of an alternative view. This study results from the same deliberate choice, recognising in the story of Lot a positive teaching value that more than matches that presented through Abraham.
BOUNDARIES AND PLURALISM

1. Major Themes In The Genesis Story About Lot

The several earlier chapters of this study have all focused largely on Tanakh texts in order to deconstruct the conventional reading of the Lot traditions and of Israel's relationships to the east. Bryan Turner (1994: 7, 18) rightly challenges what he calls textualism, whereby an exclusive focus on 'textual practices' has negated the social dimension of language and meaning. In this final chapter, I close the circle back to the issues raised in the first chapter to explore how key themes within the Lot traditions provide a window for viewing the question of social identity for Israel as a religious community.

I begin by considering a number of literary themes in the Lot traditions which express aspects of the social construction of identity for Israel, including Israel's sense of the identity of her neighbours. It is convenient to treat the various themes within three categories: the personal, the material and the corporate. The first category concerns the ancestral characters as individuals. The second category concerns the encounter between these characters and the material world and the third considers the corporate level of encounter between Moab and Ammon and Israel, represented in part by the relationship between Lot and Abraham. These three themes all contribute to a perspective upon the interplay between the universal and the particular within Tanakh traditions.

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<th>Themes in the traditions of Lot, Moab and Ammon</th>
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The interest of these themes lies in the implicit ideology they convey through circumstances in the story world, which is distinct from the explicit ideology found in statements of divine intent and in comments from the narrator. The importance of this distinction is discussed by Tucker (1990: 3) who describes narrative as first order language with a far broader ideological viewpoint than the second order promise texts based on theological reflection. Both types of text serve to legitimate religious claims and to structure religious communities and the former should not be subsumed
under the latter or presumed to be in harmony. I will then explore the interpretation of these themes for a reader in the plural context of the contemporary world.

**Personal themes**

Among the personal themes, those with a semiotic significance include seeing and knowing, female and male, and laughing and crying. In both the stories of Lot and of Abraham, these themes touch indirectly upon the questions of social identity through the way in which they treat the relationship of the human and the divine.

References to seeing and knowing are prominent in the characterisation of Lot and in the plot development of both Genesis 13 and 19.\(^{395}\) At the outset, Lot emigrates with Abraham towards a land that YHWH will let them see later (Gen 12:1). Lot moves into the Jordan after he has seen the fertility of the valley (13:10). He offers hospitality in Sodom to the two messengers as soon as he sees them (19:1). The men of the city want to know Lot's guests but he offers instead his daughters who have not known man (19:5, 8). After Lot has been delivered from the men of the city outside his door, he is not safe from their breaking in until they are blinded by the messengers (19:11). Von Rad (1972: 219) notes that blindness here means 'to see falsely'.\(^{396}\) Unable to see, the men are unable to know. The role of Lot in the incest narrative is twice characterised by the commentary that he did not know when his daughters lay down nor when they rose up. Lot is in the same position as Judah upon whom similarly there is no condemnation.\(^{397}\)

The demise of Lot's wife is linked to the theme of seeing which is first introduced in the messenger's warning to Lot (in the singular) against looking back (19:17). The report emphasises not the etiology of a salt pillar but the potency of the taboo against seeing. Here von Rad (1972: 222) suggests that under the judgement of God one cannot be a spectator but must escape or be destroyed. Note that the text does not describe the destruction of Sodom in any visual terms to support the view that Lot's wife saw something terrible. Nor does the text state that Lot's wife saw anything in particular. The prohibition of Genesis 19 recalls that given to Adam regarding the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge, in that the temptation of seeing is to the forefront in both cases (3:6-7;...

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396 This word occurs only elsewhere in 2 Kgs. 6:18, where the attacking Aramaeans are blinded in answer to the prayer of Elijah.

397 Judah saw and engaged Tamar as a prostitute, not knowing she was his daughter-in-law (38:15-16). He later acknowledges his responsibility and the narrator reports that he knew her no more (38:26). Tamar, like Lot and his daughters, becomes a link in the genealogy of David (1 Chron 2:4-5, 9-15).
19:26). There also, the theme of seeing is doubly mentioned. It was the beauty of the fruit which tempted Eve and the fruit gave knowledge which opened the eyes of Adam and Eve.

The interaction of female and male is a particular arena in which human vision provides the motivation. The stories of Lot and Abraham characterise the relationship between female and male in a variety of ways which illustrate the ambivalent relationship between gender and power in the biblical narrative. It is apparent that on the human plane, both Lot and Abraham are deferential towards other men but exhibit a dark side in relation to the women of their own families. In particular, the stories of Genesis 13, 14 and 18 present Abraham as deferential towards Lot and concerned for his safety, which theme is elaborated in Talmudic traditions. No reverse occasion is set up for Lot, but he acts affirmatively in relations with the men of Sodom. Patriarchal authority is evident in Lot's offer of his daughters to the men of the city and in the presentation of Abraham as mediator between the messengers and Sarah (18:9-15). The men make no effort to have Sarah come out of the tent although she is listening so closely. Elsewhere Abraham obliges Sarah to hide her status as his wife in foreign courts.

Alongside the above examples there are also accounts of matriarchal power. In a discussion of women's strength in the ancestral narrative, Alter (1986a: 54) comments: 'Our writer has before him both the patriarchal reality of his society, but also the knowledge in tradition of the woman as a daunting adversary or worthy partner, quite man's equal in a moral or psychological perspective, capable of exerting just as much power as he through her intelligent resourcefulness'. This comment is well illustrated in the case of Lot's daughters at the close of Genesis 19. Like Lot at the door, the daughters portray a readiness to sacrifice human dignity for the sake of preserving life. In both parts of the story a desperate situation is in view, and human sexuality expresses a power relationship between the characters.\(^{398}\) The ironic reversal by which the unknown daughters attain the status of matriarchs suggests a deliberate intention by the narrator to provide a counterpoint to the patrilineal tradition elsewhere in Genesis (Gossai, 1995: 98).\(^{399}\) It is through two daughters that Lot gains two sons.

We may consider that these stories have a significance beyond the story world. So Westermann (1985a: 315) calls for greater recognition of the role of women in the ancestral society. However, it

\(^{398}\) The same is true of the stories of Hagar enlisted as a surrogate mother, in which scenes Sarah dominates Abraham (16:6; 21:10).

\(^{399}\) The story of Lot's daughters rather undermines the generalisations about female biblical characters set out by Exum (1993a), particularly that the women are no more than parts of the stories of their husbands and sons (96), that the women are given no point of view in the story (102), and that their fertility is attributed to God (139).
is the viewpoint of the compiler of these particular traditions and not that of the ancestral society that we have before us. Within this viewpoint, Lot's daughters and Sarah share with other women in the Genesis stories a larger role than the patriarchs in preserving seed or determining the destiny of their sons.400 Clever and sometimes heroic strategies are employed, as in the case of Rebekah (Genesis 27), Tamar (Genesis 39), Jael (Judges 4) Ruth and Judith. Although these strategies raise some moral questions they are affirmed by their incorporation into the developing story of Israel as YHWH's chosen people and may not be evaluated in terms of today's moral values.

References to both laughing and crying which appear in the story of Lot and Sodom can be considered in relation to similar references regarding Sarah and Abraham. The Hebrew verbs for laughing and crying are linked and contrasted, being identical except for the central triliteral which in both cases is a guttural. The Hebrew root sehaq (to laugh or mock) appears only in Genesis apart from three references elsewhere in Tanakh. Lot's sons-in-law 'laugh' (19:14). Laughter at the thought of Sarah giving birth appears six times and is incorporated in the name 'Isaac' and in his story 21:6, 9; 26:8. 401 The root sarqap (to cry for help) is more frequent throughout Tanakh but less so in Genesis where it refers to the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:21; 19:13). 402 Through the parallelism of these related Hebrew roots in Gen 19:13-14, Lot's laughing sons-in-law are distinguished from the crying oppressed of Sodom but they are set alongside both Abraham and Sarah in their reaction to surprising news (Gen 17:17; 18:12, 13, 15; 19:14).

It is apparent that through each of the personal themes discussed above, the narrative treats the relationship of the human and divine. The ancestral story affirms human vision and knowledge alongside revelation, without the strong opposition between the two assumed by many commentators. 403 Human vision leads both Lot and Abraham to entertain divine messengers unawares. Human initiative and strategy, and the play of power between female and male, is freely incorporated into the fulfillment of divine purpose. The several references to laughing and crying express the limits of human perception and show that divine action transcends the boundaries of human expectation, both in judgement and in blessing. The stories of earlier chapters enable us to

400 The place of heterosexuality politics in Genesis is explored by Fuchs (1988).

401 The same root appears in two further texts which refer to Ishmael mocking Isaac (21:9) and Isaac laughing with Rebekah (26:8).

402 This term is first used of Abel's blood (Gen 4:10) and later of Esau (27:34) and the cry of Israel in Egypt (41:55). The same idea is expressed by a slightly different term (zavqap) found in 18:20 and in the cry of Israel to YHWH (Exod 2:23; Judg 3:9).

403 For example, Vogels (1975: 149-151) contrasts human solutions against faith in God.
read Genesis 19 with an awareness that moral considerations that are important in structuring human society do not limit divine intention. This is also true of the ambiguity between the ideal and the reality in the lives of the characters which is most transparent in the stories of Lot and his daughters. The stories of Lot and Abraham blur the boundary between human and divine prerogatives and power and give a strongly dynamic character to the interaction of the human and the divine. This observation is crucial for the self-understanding of Israel which is greatly determined by an understanding of boundaries in both these dimensions.

My treatment of the material realm in the story of the ancestors encompasses their wealth and their relationships to city and country within a transient life style. The journey theme is a significant element throughout. These themes provide a bridge between the personal and the corporate elements in the narrative to the extent that the stories of the ancestors also represent a commentary on aspects of life for later Israel and her neighbours, the Canaanites, Moab and Ammon.

Throughout the stories of Lot there are numerous references to the goods or wealth (rekuš) of Lot and of Abraham, particularly in Priestly texts. The wealth of the ancestors was primarily livestock (Gen 12:5; 16; see also 24:35), along with household goods (14:12, 16) and servants (13:2, 5; 14:12). Contrary to a later tradition, Lot's wealth is not attributed to gifts such as Abraham received in Egypt (12:16) but is consistent with his being heir to Haran.404 Both Lot and Abraham had possessions and servants sufficient to cause strife to break out (Gen 13:2, 5). This account suggests that the earlier reference to all 'their' wealth (12:5) refers to Abraham and Lot, since only the singular possessive pronoun appears in similar references to Abraham and Sarah where Lot is not included (Gen 12:20; 13:1). The importance of wealth in 12:5 is highlighted by the absence of such a reference from the similar report of Terah's journey from Ur (11:31). The theme is twice repeated as a means of linking chapters twelve and thirteen (12:20; 13:1). Only one fact about Lot's capture is recorded in Gen 14, that his goods were taken and later restored (14:12, 16). The goods of Lot and Sodom provide a key theme linking the disparate portions of Genesis 14 and 15.

Three references to Abraham refer to silver and gold, which may connote royalty (13:2; 20:16; 24:35). The absence of any such reference in regard to Lot indicates that the significance of his wealth lies elsewhere. In Genesis 12, 13 and 14 no explicit reference is made to divine providence as the source of wealth of either Abraham or Lot. The crises in which wealth features are presented

404 The Genesis Apocryphon (Martinez, 1994: 234) relates that it was in Egypt that Lot became rich and gained a wife.
in totally secular terms.\textsuperscript{405} However, in the report of Abraham's servant that \textit{YHWH} had blessed Abraham, wealth is directly identified as divine blessing (Gen 24:1, 35). I conclude that by deliberate reference to the wealth of Lot the priestly writer intends to indicate divine blessing upon him.\textsuperscript{406} Such a reading is fully consistent with the Priestly affirmation of blessing for Ishmael, who is similarly one step removed from the covenant line (17:20). There is no mention that Lot qualified for divine blessing through his relationship with Abraham, as per the ideology of Gen 12:3. Instead we find Lot independently wealthy and therefore independently blessed.\textsuperscript{407}

I further argue that there is no basis in the narrative for considering that Lot's move to Sodom or his exodus from Sodom to Zoar and the hills represented a loss of this blessing.\textsuperscript{408} The text does not indicate this, and the story does not depend on such an assumption. Despite the urgency, the messengers do not advise him to leave things behind but to bring out of Sodom whatever he has (19:12). The grammar of this instruction lacks any feature that would confine its meaning only to persons (as in the KJV, NEB and elsewhere). The instruction envisages the preservation of the wealth which is a blessing for Lot, and not just a narrow escape and loss of everything. Such a loss would not be consistent with the explicit recovery of Lot and his goods in Genesis 14, nor with the further blessing of the birth of his sons.

To the extent that Lot and Abraham represent the tribes of their descendants, the independent wealth of Lot represents for later Israel an understanding of sustained divine blessing on Moab and Ammon, which did not depend upon its response to Israel in the plains of Moab. This view is consistent with the oracles about their lands in Deuteronomy 2 and with the preceding report that the land promised to Israel could not be taken as by right (1:41-45). In a similar way, the final verse of Genesis 14 not only declares Abraham's material dependence on \textit{YHWH} but acknowledges that his Canaanite treaty partners have a claim to share his wealth. In these texts, the boundary between Israel and her neighbours is diminished.

\textsuperscript{405} It is difficult to credit explanations that Sacks (1990: 79, 81) gives that the substance and the persons (12:5) were the means Abraham would need for 'his task', since no task has been pronounced and in any case this explanation cannot encompass the wealth of Lot.

\textsuperscript{406} This conclusion is indirectly acknowledged by Wenham (1987: 296) and supported elsewhere (1994: 13) by his description of Hagar, like Mary, as a channel of blessing.

\textsuperscript{407} Among the many commentaries I have consulted, divine blessing upon Lot is acknowledged only by Fretheim (1994: 434-5).

\textsuperscript{408} Such a reading is opposite to that of Helyer (1983: 80-82) who asserts that the separation of Lot was intended as an illustration of the curse of Gen 12:3. Lot's wealth, the three rescues, and final preservation of his seed cannot be interpreted as curse.
A number of studies have examined the semiotics of city and country in the Genesis narratives for evidence of a polemic against the city life style but in my view there is no strong dichotomy between the status of town and country.⁴⁰⁹ For example, in his commentary on Lot's 'house' (Gen 19:3), Sacks (1990: 73) argues that the city represents the development of a strong sense of personal property and the rejection of the natural political bonds of rural society. In particular, Sacks identifies the door as a semiotic code and contrasts the open entrance of Abraham's tent (18:2) with the shut door of Lot's house (19:6).⁴¹⁰ While the shut door may express the need for security and the desire to distinguish what is one's own from the rest of the world, Lot's opening of the inside of his house to the messengers eliminates the distance between the inside and the outside. The story of Sodom may in some way represent the challenge of urban life to Israelite faith but there are elements in the story which caution against reading it as a polemic against the city. First, Abraham, as a representative of Israel, appears to be sympathetic to the city, both in Genesis 14 and 19. The recurring theme of the dialogue is not destruction and death but rather the possibility of saving the city. Second, if only ten righteous can be found, they will be sufficient to maintain the life of the city in the sight of YHWH. Third, Lot's word of warning to his sons-in-law, presumably Sodomites, symbolises the extension of mercy to those who will receive it, even at the last minute. Fourth, the messengers eventually spare the city of Zoar from destruction.

In the final scene, Lot has left both the pastoral and urban life styles to live in a cave. Cave dwelling was an established life style of various people, such as the Horites, so that Lot's choice of residence

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⁴⁰⁹ Coote and Ord (1989: 128) trace a deconstruction of the urban life in the Genesis material: 'J scorns the unjust urban society in terms of homosexuality and the dominance of males in military and economic roles (in David's Israel). They also note that in both Genesis 19 and Judges 19, it is an outsider who offers hospitality. In the latter case one cannot be sure that a particular condemnation represents a general polemic. More generally, J's accounts of Abraham’s relationships with and dependence upon various cities such as Salem, Hebron and Gerar portray them in a positive light. These accounts are consistent with evidence from Mari that pastoralists in the ancient near east were not simply nomads but lived in a symbiotic relationship with urban centres (see Wenham, 1994: xxiii).

⁴¹⁰ Sacks (1990: 103) imports into his reading of Sodom the distinctions made in the Torah concerning the redemption of land in the Jubilee year. The laws appear to protect the inheritance of the rural dwellers but not of the urban (Lev.25:29-34). Sacks concludes that rural life is communal while urban living is individualist.
cannot be considered especially exceptional. The reversal of Lot’s earlier escape to Zoar suggests that the narrator has deliberately set the close of his story in a place of refuge, in accord with the motif of Lot as an object of deliverance. Although a cave may serve as a burial place, in this story a place of refuge gives rise to new life in Lot’s sons. This new life undercuts the reading of the story as Lot’s demise, which is based mainly on a moralistic interpretation of the sexual element in the story. The story of Lot, as the one biblical character who experiences all three life styles, points to the operation of divine providence regardless of location. I conclude that the living situation in each case does not of itself possess a particular value in the mind of the narrator. In my view, the story of Sodom illustrates the tension between the danger in the city of loss of social control and the potential in the city for building up the universal community envisioned in the promises to Abraham. Lot’s offering hospitality and his admonishing the men of Sodom are symbols of the deeds and words that may maintain the life of the city.

Alongside family issues, the theme of journey has the highest priority and frequency in the stories of both Lot and Abraham and, like genealogy, serves as a literary structural device. This function is evident in the way that the journey of Abraham’s servant back to Mesopotamia (Genesis 24) matches the initial migration (Genesis 12). Within the toledot of Terah, Haran in Syria, rather than Ur of Sumeria, plays a central role in these journeys. The journey reports also have a thematic significance, not least in Lot and Abraham leaving the familiar (Gen 12:1; 19:12). As the stories develop, journey is not just a matter of translocation from one familiar place to another, but it becomes a life style of dislocation, represented by the term, ‘sojourner’ to describe both Abraham and Lot. Where the two verbs, ‘to sojourn’ and ‘to live’, are used of the ancestors, no claim to land ownership appears in the narratives. Contrast the verb ‘to possess’ (yarar) that I identified above in the context of land claims in Deuteronomy 2 (pp. 31-2). The entire ancestral narrative presents both Lot and Abraham, and the next two generations, living as aliens in a land belonging to other people (12:6; 13:7; 15:19-21; 24:3).

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411 Tanakh has few references to caves, most of which refer to places of refuge (Josh 10:1; 1 Samuel 22, 24; 1 Kings 18:4; 19:9). David lived for a time in the cave of Adullam (1 Sam 22:1; 2 Sam 23:13) which is described as a fortified hold.

412 References to ‘city of Nahor’ (Gen 24:10) and ‘Paddan Aram’ (25:20; 28:5) also indicate Haran, as does the more general reference ‘beyond the river’ (Josh 24:2-3). Since the Greek text refers to ‘land of the Chaldees’ in each place where the MT has ‘Ur of the Chaldees’, Westermann (1985a: 135) suggests that the important thing is not the place but distinguishing the old order from the new. This corresponds to an understanding that variations in itinerary reports, like those in genealogical lists, are not to be considered contradictory but represent different purposes among traditions.
The very brief account of Lot’s wife is also notably a journey report. The possibility of her looking back is predicated on the fact that she is on the move and the judgement upon her takes the form of an immobilisation during her journey. The phenomenon by which salt pillars are continually formed and destroyed by the action of weather leads Aycock (1983: 116-7) to affirm that the story of Lot’s wife immortalises the transitional state of the rite of passage between the old and the new. In this way the story resonates with the continual translocation evident in the stories of Lot and Abraham.

The journey elements in the story of Lot and his wife take on a special light in view of the translocation that dominates the Tanakh history of Israel. This feature appears with the expulsion from the garden of Adam and Eve and the wandering of Cain, continues with Noah’s riding on the flood and in the dispersion of the tower builders and leads through Abraham and Sarah to the stories of Joseph and the Exodus, finally culminating with the Exile. Divine providence may be seen in all these events, where the element of judgement is balanced by the redeeming feature of new life. So Westermann (1985a: 148) rightly characterises the journeys of the ancestors of and of Israel, not as trials (as in later Jewish tradition), but as the ‘experience of God’s saving hand’. It seems that, inadvertently, Westermann has drawn upon the prophetic language of the hand in Genesis 19. His view of journey as saving experience supports a reading of the narrative that sees dislocation as a life style intrinsic to the human journey with God. There is finally no going back, whether to the garden, to Haran, to Sodom, or to the same situation in Canaan, but only another movement outward.  

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413 The exodus tradition clearly records that the Israelites had enjoyed a long period of material prosperity in Egypt which represented for them the blessing of God, not dependent on the land of Canaan in any way. Later, much of the impetus for the development of Judaism arose from the experience of diaspora.

414 Elsewhere, Westermann (1985a: 141) appears tied to an alternative Tanakh perspective that the migration pattern reaches ‘its ultimate goal in the promised land, the land which is Israel’s own’. However, the blessing of Gen 12:2-3 does not depend on a promise of land but will eventuate only as Abraham is detached from adherence to land and willing to move on. So also Hagar receives promises only when she has journeyed into the desert as an outcast.

415 Such a reading differs from that of Meye (1990: 592) who finds in Genesis 1-11 a mythical pattern of separation and reintegration that provides a paradigm for exile and return in the historiography of Israel. The eirenic tradition regarding Lot and his offspring, in which genealogical divisions are ultimately not significant in the relation of God and humanity, conforms to the paradigm of a continual outward movement.
In summary of the material themes, it is evident that the narrative presents a fluidity of boundaries in both divine intention and human experience. The divine blessing of wealth and land is enjoyed by both Abraham and Lot and their people, in which both rural and urban life play their part. On both sides we find the security of settled living interrupted by dislocation and the challenge of journey away from the familiar. In all circumstances, human life for Israel and others exists under the saving hand of YHWH.

Corporate themes

In this section I treat texts which touch upon the sense of identity of Israel in relation to other peoples. Four matters of particular interest are the function in Tanakh of the term 'Hebrew', the Israelite understanding of Moab and Ammon as close kin, how Israel is distinguished from such close kin, and conceptions of rights to land settlement.

In the previous chapter I noted the occurrence of the word 'Hebrew' in Gen 14:13 by which the narrator, perhaps from an east Jordanian viewpoint, identifies Abraham. We may consider how the use of this term reflects the sense of identity of the Israelites. The English word derives directly from the Hebrew root צבי. This root appears in Tanakh in the common verb, צבי, 'to cross over', in the noun (sometimes adverb) צבי, 'other side', and in the proper name אבר, an ancestor of Abraham (Gen 10:21-25). The verb form is used of Abraham traversing the land (Gen 12:6) and many times of Israel crossing the Jordan to possess the land (Deut 12:10; Josh 3:14-17). The noun form appears four times in a speech of Joshua which reports the tradition that Abraham and the ancestors of Israel lived 'on the other side' of the Euphrates (Josh 24:2, 3, 14, 15). This tradition, together with those about the crossing of the Red Sea and of the Jordan, explains the use of this root to identify Israel as Hebrews.

The term 'Hebrew' is found frequently in references to the Israelites among the Egyptians (Gen 39:14; Exod 1:16, 19) and to David and other Israelites among the Philistines (1 Sam 13:19) but is rare elsewhere. However, the term 'Israelite' dominates throughout Tanakh and from the time of David's kingdom, references in the mouth of foreigners also use the term 'Israel'. The appearance of the term 'Israelite' in these contexts suggests that 'Hebrew' is not yet an ethnic term, contrary to the assertion in TWOT (1980: 643). References to Hebrew bond servants protected by laws of redemption are also ambiguous (Exod 21:1ff, Deut 15:12; Jer 34:9, 14). Von Rad (1966: 107) argues that the reference to Hebrews in Deut 15:12 reveals a transition from a social to a national

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416 Zeitlin (1984: 48-52, 54) also considers 'Hebrew' an ethnic designation but he allows that Lot, Ishmael and Esau may represent an early association of Hebrew tribes.
significance.\textsuperscript{417} However, the use of the term 'Hebrew' in Genesis usually does not support the assertion of von Rad (1972: 179) that an inferior social class is in view.\textsuperscript{418} Whether or not the term 'Hebrew' is also linked to the cuneiform term Habiru is a secondary matter.\textsuperscript{419} The term 'Hebrew' in Gen 14:13 may be adequately explained by the non-Israelite origin of the text.

Although the term 'Hebrew' now identifies the language and culture of the Jews, in Tanakh this root has no explicit ideological significance.\textsuperscript{420} The common element in the several Tanakh references to the Hebrews is their sociological status, particularly as immigrants.\textsuperscript{421} This characteristic explains why the refugees who became allies of David under Philistine protection are called

\textsuperscript{417} The text in Deuteronomy may indicate that the Hebrew bond servants were not out of Egypt, since the Israelites are told to treat the Hebrew servants well, remembering their own slavery. In the Jeremiah text, the identification of the Hebrews as Jews seems to be a secondary addition, for it reads literally 'so as not to make slaves of them, of a Jew, his brother, anyone' (Bright 1979: 221).

\textsuperscript{418} This is apparent in Genesis 14: Abraham the Hebrew is a person of wealth and influence. Note further that in the story of Joseph we already have reference to the Hebrews as land occupiers (Gen 40:15).

\textsuperscript{419} Many commentators have noted the linguistic connection between the term 'Hebrew' and the term Habiru found in texts of the fourteenth century BCE from Rash Shamra in Syria and from Tell el Amarna in Egypt. These texts describe the Habiru as hired warriors who plunder the land and capture the cities. See quotations in Finegan (1959) Vol. 1, pp. 110-111. On the basis of this evidence, Vawter (1977: 195) concludes that the Abraham of Genesis 14 is presented as a Habiru chieftain whose troops are committed in the service of the king of Sodom. I cannot agree, since Abraham has only a defensive role and refuses to be indebted to the king of Sodom. Moreover Abraham is a considerable distance from Sodom and already has a treaty commitment to the Amorites. Speiser (1964: 103) finds the evidence of a connection between the two terms ambiguous. Clearly the Hebrews in Egypt in the late second millenium BCE were not fighters like the Habiru (Exodus 1-2). On the other hand, the reference to Hebrews fighting with the Philistines (1 Sam 14:21) supports the view of Gottwald (1993: xxv-xxvi) that Israel had other roots among disaffected Canaanites who became Habiru bandits.

\textsuperscript{420} The role of God in the journeys of Israel is frequently expressed by the Hiphil form of the verb גשה, 'to cause to go out' (Gen 15:7; Exod 12:17; Deut 1:27) but never by the equivalent form: 'to cause to cross over'. A different root again is used in the testimony of Abraham to Sarah, where he states that God 'caused me to wander from my father's house' (Hiphil of מצא, Gen 20:13).

\textsuperscript{421} The social role of the Habiru as contracted servants is emphasised in an article in DNTT (1976: 305) and is identified with the social status of the 'Hebrew' in Egypt (1 Sam 14:21).
Hebrews (1 Sam 14:21). The term 'Hebrew' implicitly carries forward one of the key teachings of the Torah, that in their relations with others, the Israelites are to remember that they themselves were strangers in Egypt (e.g. Exod 22:21; 23:9; Lev 19:34; Deut 10:19). From this perspective, the designation of Abraham as the Hebrew serves not to distinguish him from Lot but to place both men on the same plane.

The fact that Lot is first mentioned in Tanakh as a kinsman of Abraham brings to the fore the tradition of kinship between the Moabites and Ammonites and Israel through descent from Terah. Westermann (1985a: 314) argues that the tribal names 'Moab' and 'Ammon' were a secondary feature of the final verses of Genesis 19, since the account lacks the typical etiological form: 'because they said ...'. As the mothers were unnamed, so too were the sons originally. However, this disregards the evidence of the LXX where a different text tradition includes explanations of the sons' names: Moab, 'of my father' (v.37), and Ammon, 'the son of my kin' (genou, v.38). Regarding Moab, the LXX goes part way toward the meaning given by Gesenius: 'the water of a father' derived from the verb 'to flow' (naor). For water as semen, see also Num.24:7, Prov.5:16, Isa.48:1. Regarding Ammon, an Arabic usage of the word 'am, ('people') denotes the singular kinsman on the father's side, such as an uncle, which again would place the emphasis in the names upon the kinship the sons share with Lot. The literary significance of the names, whatever it may have been, is to be distinguished from linguistic explanations, such as that from Knauf (1992a: 47) who suggests a toponymic explanation for the name Moab, connected to the Arabic 'al-bun, meaning distinguished.

These tribes probably had their own tradition of links back to Lot but this tradition has been deliberately affirmed by the compiler of Genesis 19. The incorporation of Genesis 19 within the Priestly genealogical structure, the toledot of Terah (Gen 11:27), maintains and structures the kinship relationship. As Steinmetz (1990: 148) elaborates, kinship accounts provide a symbolic structure that expresses a society's world view. To this end the toledot of Terah encompasses the continuing links between Canaan and Mesopotamia, which is important in the case of Rebeckah and Rachel, from the line of Nahor, who are incorporated into Abraham's line by marriage. The toledot also encompasses the story of Lot, whose sons, Moab and Ammon, bear the same relationship to

422 Goldziher (1967: 357-8) compares the claim of the Moabites and Ammonites to descent from Lot with the adherence of Persian Muslims to Isaac as the son offered by Abraham, not to Ishmael, as in the Qur'an (Surah 37:83-113). Upholding a different tradition enabled the Persians to stand against the cultural dominance of Arabic traditions. This comparison would be relevant to the periods of Israelite hegemony over Moab and Ammon.
Abraham's line as Nahor's daughters, Rebekah and Rachel. The birth stories of Moab and Ammon would not have appeared in a *toledot* of Abraham (Gen 11:27). Ironically, the incestuous relationship of Lot and his daughters fulfills the requirements of endogamy within the clan of Terah, as much as the marriages of Nahor (Gen 11:29) and Abraham (20:12).

The Genesis kinship tradition is reaffirmed by the Deuteronomists (Deut.2, 9,19), by the eirenic accounts of Israel in the plains of Moab, and in the stories of close co-operation and intermarriage between royal houses. The Chronicler and Ezra and Nehemiah report the fact of intermarriage throughout the centuries of the Israelite kingdoms. The story of Ruth supports intermarriage and tells how David, a man of Moabite ancestry, became the king of Israel. The alternative traditions of hostility may also be based upon recognition of kinship, emphasising where kinship obligations were betrayed. So the Deuteronomic exclusion of Ammon and Moab from the congregation of Israel implies that, like Israelites, they otherwise had a prior right of access and certainly were expected to offer hospitality (Deut.23:3-7). The mixture of eirenic and hostile traditions about Israel in the Plains of Moab well illustrates the mutual interdependence of the tribal groups and the changing power balance between them.

In earlier chapters, I have discussed the ways in which the Yahwist narrative implies not only kinship but a similar status for Moab and Ammon alongside Israel, particularly in the mutual relationship of Lot and Abraham shown in the tradition that 'Lot went with Abraham' (Genesis 12), in their portrayal as wealthy pastoralists (Genesis 13) and in the use of the term 'brother'. The status of Moab and Ammon is made equal with that of Israel within the *toledot* of Terah (Gen 11:27) in which they, like Jacob (i.e. Israel) and Esau, are great grandsons of Terah. If Lot's daughters had found other husbands, their sons would have been one generation younger and not of direct male descent from Terah. So Delitzsch (1888: 65), against the prevailing commentaries,

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423 Weisman (1992), who rightly observes that Lot's daughters could have provided partners for Abraham's sons, argues that such marriages were ruled out by their seduction of Lot. Such an explanation does not consider that elsewhere in Tanakh, kinship concerns prevail over sexual irregularities.

424 The relation between incest and endogamy is explored by Leach (1973), by Boothe (1989: 51-61) and by Crüsemann (1996: 68),

425 On the basis of the records of intermarriage from the earliest period of Israelite life, Zeitlin (1984: 53) characterises the Hebrews as inhabitants of the advanced cultures of their time. This acknowledges a tendency towards engagement rather than exclusivity.

426 Based upon these writings, the study of identity by Dyck (1996: 97) illustrates the effect of popular perceptions of ethnicity that are broader than those of the elite in Israel.
asserted that descent from Lot is both an honour and a protection to these tribes. The above observations show that for Israel, Moab and Ammon represent par excellence what Brett (1996: 10) has called the most problematic social boundary between 'us' and those who are 'like us'.

The nature of the kinship which is affirmed at the start and finish of the story of Lot is qualified by the intervening account of the separation of Lot and Abraham. This account follows that of the separation of Abraham and Terah (Gen 12:4) which begins to differentiate between those who become bound to YHWH in a covenant and those who do not. The report that Terah also migrated towards Canaan (11:31), but without divine command, suggests that there were some earthly reasons for migration upon which ideological perspectives have been built. Equally, the separation of Lot and Abraham owing to strife, not between themselves but between their household members, has ideological significance, even though it involves no divine initiative. For a time when such stories have attained canonical status, they have a significant role in the construction of Israelite or Jewish identity but here again different viewpoints emerge. The Priestly identification of Canaan as the destination of Terah's entire kinship group (11:31) stands over against the radical separation within the family and the journey into the unknown implied by the Yahwist (12:1).

The story of Ruth and Naomi comments upon that of their respective ancestors, Lot and Abraham. In both cases separation is urged from the side of Israel and expresses magnanimity on the part of Abraham and Naomi, leaving the initiative with Lot and Ruth. Ruth's response contrasts with that of Lot and the same verb is used to mark her refusal to part from Naomi (positor, Ruth 1:17) as describes the separation of Abraham and Lot (hippored, Gen 13:9). While Lot lacks Ruth's intention, the events of Genesis 14 and 19 show that Lot similarly remains in relationship with both Abraham and YHWH. The common viewpoint of the stories of Lot and Ruth is that social differentiations made on a human plane according to covenant do not qualify the universal aspect of divine compassion in which Moab is included. On the other hand, the prophetic books condemn Israel equally with other nations for her offences.427

The issue of land settlement appears throughout the ancestral narrative, beginning with the promises in Gen 12:1 & 7. A decision about land occupation is at the heart of the story of the separation of Abraham and Lot (13:8-9). Abraham's willingness to settle for half the land of Canaan represents a remarkable lack of tenacity for the land, apart from the possibility that the land occupied by Lot is

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427 It is difficult to sustain the thesis of Kunin (1995: 201) that genealogical closeness is inverse to ideological closeness. In the prophetic books, it is not apparent that those supposedly of closer kin are treated more negatively. Contrary to Kunin's assertions (193-4), the king of Moab is not cursed, and Deuteronomy 2 is not the only positive reference to Moab. The gracious treatment of Lot in Genesis 19 at least matches that of Abraham.
understood as remaining within the land of promise. As an ideology for later Israel, Abraham's offer then becomes an affirmation that the obligations of kinship go beyond peaceful relationships to the sharing of land, and declares that the blessing of God was never to be dependent on a political state. The status of Canaanites on the land is raised in 12:6 and 13:7 and developed in 14:13 which describes a treaty (berit) between Abraham and three Amorite brothers. The significance of this treaty relationship is illustrated by the determination of Abraham that they should receive their 'portion' (ḥēleq, 14:24).428 In context, the portion clearly refers to the booty although this is not specified. However, the dominant usage of the Hebrew term ḥēleq in Tanakh, especially in the Deuteronomistic texts, is in reference to land.429 The treaty implies a mutual recognition of land rights. Abraham's rescue of the goods and people of Sodom, a Canaanite city (Gen 10:19), also affirms their rights and that the story of Sodom does not reflect an a priori rejection of the Canaanites.

A different view of land settlement appears in the promise of Gen 15:18-21 in which YHWH makes a covenant with Abraham promising the enormous territory from the Nile to the Euphrates, then occupied by ten nations.430 The Deuteronomistic history records that some of these peoples were incorporated into Israel by alliance rather than conquest, particularly the Kenites and Kennizites.431

428 These Amorites were those of the western hills (Josh 10:5; 24:8), not of the east Jordan (Num 21:21-32). The eastern Amorites, who opposed Israel, may be indicated in Gen 15:16, or possibly those of the south (Num 14:20-45; Deut 1:34-45; also described as Amalekites). To account for the place in this story of the Amorite brothers, it is not necessary with Vawter (1977: 194) to assume they are created as eponymous ancestors in order to enhance the military status of Abraham, since their accompanying Abraham is not considered important to the narrator.

429 In several references in Deuteronomy, the noun ḥēleq refers to the Levites having no portion of the land and references in Joshua refer to the apportionment of the land among the tribes. The corresponding feminine noun form refers to a parcel of land (Gen 33:19 and often in 2 Samuel and 2 Kings). Apart from some references in Ecclesiastes to enjoying what one has worked hard for, there are no other texts in Tanakh where the root refers to material goods.

430 Zeitlin (1984: 123-8) distinguishes five different conceptions of the scope of the promised land, although these were probably coexistent rather than sequential as he explains them. Habel (1995) provides an analysis of the variety of land ideologies found in various biblical traditions.

431 The Kenites and Kennizites were located east and south of Canaan. The Kenites are described as allies in the period of the Judges, Saul and David (Judg 1:16; 4:11, 16; 1 Sam 15:6, 27:10, 30:29). The Kennizites were of Edomite origin (Gen 36:11) but became linked to Judah via Caleb (Josh 14: 6, 14; Judg. 1:13).
The last seven nations more local to Canaan were, according to the closely related text in Deut 7:2, to be totally destroyed to save Israel from religious corruption.\textsuperscript{432} Perhaps this hostile policy was an alternative to peaceful infiltration as envisaged in Genesis. At least the various texts condemning the Canaanites highlight the fact that the lands of Moab and Ammon (and Edom) are not included in the promise to Abraham, and these texts are consistent with the divine gift of lands recorded in Deuteronomy 2. The close link between the affirmation of ancestry and the gift of land (Deut 2:4-5, 9, 19) follows the pattern linking the land promise for Israel to their ancestry, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Deut 1:8; 6:10; 9:5 etc.), and shows the Deuteronomist’s intention to place Israel’s promise of land in a relative context. This is also the effect of the separation story in Gen 13:1-12. Texts in both Genesis and Deuteronomy consistently support a policy of peaceful coexistence between Israel and Moab and Ammon.

An important consideration regarding the land promise is its general separation from promises of posterity, first apparent in Gen 12:2 & 7. This pattern dominates throughout Genesis where, of the sixty-eight texts which refer to blessing, only five refer also to the promise of land while twenty-one refer to posterity.\textsuperscript{433} The distinction between promises of posterity and land is important for Israel, both in the era of hegemony over her neighbours and in pondering her own survival as a landless people in exile. It points to the possibility that Israel can establish a sense of identity among her neighbours which does not depend on a rigid claim to land.\textsuperscript{434}

\textsuperscript{432} The inclusion of Gergashites in Gen 15:21 identifies it as a Deuteronomistic text (Deut 7:1-3). Elsewhere in the Deuteronomistic history, the various lists of the nations of Canaan consistently refer to only six peoples: the Hittites, Perizzites, Amorites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites. The reference to an 'heir' (15:3) for Abraham and the description of the promised land (for the first time) as a 'possession' (15:7) both derive from the one root, yerəš, which is typical of Deuteronomy and contrasts with the use of 'sojourn' and 'dwell' elsewhere in the ancestral narrative. Of twelve references in Genesis to the gift of the land, only two in Genesis 15:7 and 28:4 refer to it as a possession, while this notion appears over sixty times in Deuteronomy.

\textsuperscript{433} The pattern is sustained in Genesis 17 where the notion of blessing is linked only to the promise of posterity for Sarah (17:16) and for Ishmael (17:20) and not to the land promise (17:8). An exception to this pattern is evident in 26:3-4 where blessing for Israel and the blessing of all nations both incorporate the gift to Isaac’s descendants of ‘all these countries’. This reference is normally considered part of the Yahwist narrative although the plural ‘countries’ is found elsewhere only in 10:20, from P.

\textsuperscript{434} At the conclusion of her study of the Pentateuch traditions, Boorer (1992: 450) points in the same direction. She notes that the land oath texts express a lack of fulfillment of the promise, and quotes from T. S. Elliot the notion that possession comes via dispossession.
Each of the four corporate themes reveal a fine balance in Tanakh between traditions which identify the experience of Israel with that of other nations, and traditions which identify Israel as distinct from others. The conception of the Hebrew people as strangers who cross over resonates with the pervasive journey theme and points to the incorporation of a faith community which exists beyond both geographical and ethnic boundaries. Through the incest story, Moab and Ammon are acknowledged as kin to Israel and of similar status. The ancient story of the separation of Lot and Abraham is first used by the Yahwist to propagate the promise tradition (Gen 13:14-17) but only within a conception of continuing kinship links (Gen 12:4) and universal blessing (12:2-3). With a similar view, the Priestly tradition incorporates the Yahwist conception within the structure of the toledot of Terah. At the beginning of this structure, P uniquely affirms that Terah also set out for Canaan (11:31), and towards the close, the births of Moab and Ammon signify divine blessing upon the entire toledot of Terah. Finally, a land peculiar to Israel is no longer an absolute nor an adequate goal. The secondary place of the land promise in relation to the promise of posterity may be understood as a metaphor for the possibility that Israel can have a sense of religious identity which does not depend on the exclusion of other peoples from divine providence.

Subverting the meta-narrative

The foregoing thematic analysis reveals the many openings towards a universal conception of divine favour and purpose found in the story of Lot and of Moab and Ammon that are especially apparent in elements of the story world. From this analysis and those earlier in this study, I now summarise the apparent communicative intentions of the compilers of the Lot traditions.

1) The presentation of Lot in the context of an agon and his characterisation as hospitable and courageous and yet ambivalent shows the intention to express through his story something different from that found in the parallel story of Abraham.

2) The introduction into Tanakh in Genesis 19 of the theme of mercy corresponds to the central interest of the compiler in the theme of divine deliverance as against issues of morality and righteousness. The name Lot bears a close relationship to two Hebrew verbs of escape.

3) The relative disinterest in the judgement of Sodom highlights the intention to treat the relationship of the individual to the divine. Unique linguistic links to prophetic and other traditions place Lot on a par with Israel and her heroes, to present one outside of the covenant and of the line of Abraham as an object of divine favour.435

435 This reading is not acknowledged in any commentaries I have sighted, although Kunin (1995: 80) states that in Gen 19:29, Lot represents Israel, receiving salvation because God remembered Abraham.
4) The lack of closure of Genesis 19 regarding Lot, and the final focus upon Moab and Ammon, claim for these neighbours of Israel the same status before YHWH as that of Lot.

The common implication of these several analyses is that the motive of the compiler of the Lot traditions is to deconstruct the boundaries established around Israel as the elect of YHWH. In contemporary terms, the Lot traditions subvert the meta-narrative constructed around Abraham, both in Tanakh and in subsequent religious traditions. Despite significant differentiations within Tanakh between peoples in their relationship to the divine purpose, particularly in terms of covenant, we find also the viewpoint that the God of Israel is not limited by these distinctions. The net effect of the deconstruction of boundaries in the texts relating to Lot and his offspring is to negate the outward evidences of Israel’s distinctiveness, such as land and circumcision, and thus to highlight at the heart of Israel’s identity the inner conviction of her divine election to be a blessing.

2. The Universal and the Particular in the Lot traditions

I take up again the interplay of the Lot and the Abraham traditions to explore how they treat the universal and the particular. This exploration is of special interest for the contemporary, multicultural world and is the major thread in the remainder of this study. Naturally, the vast range of commentary, whether Jewish, Christian or Muslim, is preoccupied with the traditions which legitimate particular religious structures, especially the traditions respecting Abraham. I will treat first the universal in the Genesis traditions and then in the later accounts of Israel and her eastern neighbours, highlighting the deconstructive presentation of the Lot and Ruth traditions in Tanakh. This prepares the ground for a close examination of the juxtaposition of the themes of righteousness and mercy in Genesis 18 and 19.

The story of Hagar and Ishmael is an important example of the universal in the Yahwist account. These two who leave Abraham’s house still receive promise of fruitfulness (16:10; 21:18).

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436 Here I affirm with Brett (1991:16) the validity of proposing an authorial intention, subject as he advises to the rigour of a multifaceted analysis and the recognition of a pluralist understanding of biblical studies.

437 There is little value in rehearsing universal elements of Genesis 1-11 since they envision an era prior to Israel when questions of boundary did not apply. While in Jewish tradition (Gen R 19:7; Num R 11:2), the advent of Abraham is understood as a reversal of the trend of dispersion and a turn towards the restoration of the shekinah glory, Anderson (1994: 165-178) and Crusemann (1996: 72) see in the story of Babel an affirmation of ethnic pluralism as a divine blessing.

438 Whatever the dating of the earliest J texts may be, it is evident that an understanding of the universal reign of God existed in Israel in the traditions of the eighth century prophets (Amos 9:7).
Westermann (1985a: 249) notes the literary plurality of announcements about Ishmael (Gen 16:9, 10, 11) and asserts: 'It was clearly the narrator's intention to allow many voices to speak which do not echo the main theme. One must be careful not to force all motifs onto the same line.' The Yahwist view is echoed in the Priestly account, where blessing upon Ishmael (17:20) follows the blessing of all humanity (1:28) while the declaration of an exclusive covenant between Abraham and YHWH (Gen 17:19-21) contrasts with the covenant between YHWH, Noah and all living things (Gen 9:15). The circumcision of Ishmael along with Abraham establishes a symbolic bridge between their descendants. Hagar, like Lot, shows that within ancient biblical traditions, human experience and vision of God is as much the property of the marginal and the outsider as of the faith hero at the centre of the tradition.

Universal sympathies are also apparent in the eirenic treatments of Abraham's relationships with his Amorite confederates and the kings of Sodom and of Salem (Genesis 14) and with Abimelech of Gerar (Genesis 20-21). In the affirmation of Melchizedek and his cult outside of Israel, it is apparent that the writer does not intend to discriminate between Abraham and Melchizedek in religious terms. Von Rad (1972: 180) remarks that such toleration of a Canaanite cult outside Israel is unparalleled in the Old Testament. A key element of the encounter is Abraham's attribution to

439 Studies by Teubal (1962) and Trible (1984) illustrate how the character Hagar, like Lot, embodies significant perspectives that contribute to the diversity of Tanakh traditions.

440 Unlike the J tradition, P offers fruitfulness and the land as an everlasting possession in return for the discipline of circumcision but the account lacks any specific moral requirements. The substantial place of the Lot and Hagar stories in the ancestral narrative and their special place within divine providence shows the inadequacy of the view of Rendtorff (1989) that covenant is a structuring concept in Genesis - Exodus. Even P as a final redaction is not limited to the ideology of covenant.

441 Note that in the practice of circumcision, Israel was not considered distinct from the Edomites, Egyptians, Ammonites & Moabites (Jer. 9:24f) and only in Babylon did it constitute a means of differentiation for the Jews. Furthermore, Jeremiah deliberately condemns Israel along with the uncircumcised nations, thus recognising that circumcision was not the key concern. Within the Torah, the command to circumcise appears in just three places: Exod 12:48; Lev 12:3; Deut 10:16. Contrast a number of other laws that are frequently repeated in the Torah.

442 The story of Balaam, who also serves God Most High, may be an exception since there is some evidence of a cult associated with him. Given the clear affirmation of Melchizedek, it seems to me that von Rad falls a long way short, and is somewhat condescending, where he concludes that Melchizedek 'came close to believing in the one God of the world, whom Israel alone knew'.
YHWH of the epithet, 'God Most High (ℵאלב יבונ), the possessor of heaven and earth', first introduced by Melchizedek (Gen 14:19, 20, 22).\textsuperscript{443} This encounter affirms that YHWH's covenant with Israel as an agent of divine purpose does not exclude the role of others as agent.\textsuperscript{444} It also reflects an understanding that a universal conception of God is essential to the idea of universal divine blessing.\textsuperscript{445}

A universal viewpoint also appears in the Sodom traditions. Delitzsch (1988: 52) sees in the story of Abraham and his dialogue with God (Genesis 18) that even the people of Sodom are first treated as neighbours: 'Religion has not yet assumed its temporary intermediate and national form'. Genesis 19 develops the story in harmony with this view by portraying the destruction of Sodom, in part, as a judgement for the failure of the city to treat strangers as neighbours. The story thus condemns those who reject the principle of a pluralist community. So von Rad (1972: 212) affirms that Sodom is not considered so distinct from the covenant people 'as if God would grant a different forgiveness for it than for Israel. Rather it is the pattern for human community under the judgement of God. God has a communal relationship with Sodom too.' Von Rad's reading is quite consistent with the metaphor of 'sister' in the oracle of Ezekiel 16 that places Sodom and Jerusalem, with Samaria, in the closest

\textsuperscript{443} 'Most High God' is especially frequent in the Psalms and was used by the Maccabees: (Jos. Ant. xvi 163; Ass. Moses, 6:1). Outside of the Psalms, this divine name appears in Tanakh only ten times, always in poetic texts. The other occurrences are found in the Song of Moses (Deut 32:8), the Song of David (2 Sam 22:14), in Lamentations 3:35, 38, and in Isa 14:14, describing the king of Babylon's desire to be like the Most High God, and in Dan 7:18-27, referring to the saints of the Most High. Von Rad (1972: 180) notes that the same title was used for the head of the pantheon of Ras Shamra.

\textsuperscript{444} This is the prophetic view regarding the emperor Cyrus (Isa 44:28; 45:1).

\textsuperscript{445} The acknowledgement of a common God Most High contrasts with the unusual and presumably ancient distinction between the god of Abraham and the god of Nahor (31:44; 31:53). The latter text in the MT has signs of an attempt to gloss this distinction. A transliteration reads: 'Let Elohim of Abraham and Elohim of Nahor judge (plural) between us, Elohim of their father, and Jacob swore ...'. The evidence of a gloss has been removed in the LXX text. Without the gloss, the text reflects the Deuteronomic report that the fathers of Israel 'served other gods' (Josh 24:2). This distinction is no longer apparent in the report that Laban and Bethuel acknowledge the god of Israel along with Jacob (Gen 24:50). There is a tension in Genesis between texts which convey a common religious outlook between Canaan and Mesopotamia and those which present a radical difference. See Zeitlin (1984: 60).
kinship relation. Ezekiel’s vision of restoration for all three sister cities reinforces the similar status before God of both covenant and non-covenant peoples.\footnote{Restoration is also in view for Moab and Ammon (Jer 48:47; 49:6), Elam (Jer 49:39), and Egypt (Ezek 29:14).} Certain texts concerned with Moab and Ammon also recognise YHWH as universal, notably the story of Balaam, which is the only other Tanakh text where the divine name, -el elyon, is invoked by someone outside of Israel (Num 24:16).\footnote{In his initial response and other speeches, Balaam identifies YHWH as his god (Num 22:8, 13, 18 etc.) while the narrator consistently refers to God as -elohim (22:9, 10, 12, 20).} Balaam acknowledges God Most High on behalf of the leaders of Moab, as does Melchizedek on behalf of the people of Salem. This connection to Balaam is also relevant in the way that it echoes divine mercy towards Lot. Divine intervention in Balaam’s journey and intentions avoids the potentially destructive consequences for Moab of cursing Israel.\footnote{The term hesed, so significant in Genesis 19, does not appear anywhere in Tanakh to describe the divine attitude to Moab and Ammon, although it appears on the human plane to express the loyalty of David towards king Hanun of Ammon (2 Sam 10:2). This observation is consistent with the view that the story of Genesis 19 is a reflection from hindsight upon Israel and her eastern neighbours.} Similarly, the oracles of Deuteronomy 2 ensure the protection of the lands of Moab and Ammon from Israelite hostilities. Isaiah’s heartfelt allusion to Zoar as a refuge for Moabites suggests indulgence towards Moab (Isa 16:9-11), as also the promises of ultimate restoration in the oracles of Jeremiah (Jer 48:47; 49:6). Sacks (1990: 78) succinctly expresses the ambiguity in Israel’s relations with Moab and Ammon where he notes that against the constant play of the distinction between the Chosen People and the rest of humanity, the descendants of Lot are somehow included and somehow not included. In this regard, Moab and Ammon represent to some degree the situation of all those outside Israel.

The deconstruction of boundaries is expressed most brilliantly in the traditions of Lot and Ruth.\footnote{In my view, the Ruth tradition is subsequent to that of Genesis 19. Robert Hubbard (1988: 46) makes a rigorous review of arguments for the dating of the book of Ruth and settles upon the Solomonic era, with acknowledged uncertainty. However, concerning a possible post-exilic date, his arguments speak only against the necessity of same but not against the possibility.} These traditions, which are arguably later than the eirenic texts quoted above, finally draw Moab and Ammon into the closest possible relation to Israel within the scope of divine providence. I showed in earlier chapters that the compiler of Genesis 19 establishes unique links between the rescue of Lot and the prophetic account of YHWH’s relationship to corporate Israel. In retrospect,
the twice repeated theme of the deliverance of Lot specifically extends to Moab and Ammon Israel's experience of the saving hand of YHWH, first from Egypt and later from Babylon. The births of Moab and Ben Ammi illustrate the mercy of YHWH toward those like Lot's daughters who, with moral strength, make the choices needed for their own survival.

I have also demonstrated that the presentation of Lot establishes a unique range of thematic and linguistic links between Lot and individual Israelite heroes. His hospitality in Scene One reflects that of Abraham and Gideon. His words in Scene Two recall the words of Samuel. The divine warning to escape, in Scene Three, recalls the story of Noah. The language of divine mercy and grace and rescue in Scenes Three and Four connect Lot to Joseph, David and Ezra and to Israel as a whole. His final scene in Act Two links Lot to Judah and to Moses. It is remarkable that the one character in Tanakh whose story evokes such links is the one who is the first to be distinguished as outside of a covenant relationship with YHWH.

These observations are summed up in an insightful comment from Westermann (1985a: 157-8) who takes Abraham's journey of altar-building as a metaphor for Israel: 'The sedentary life and form of worship of later Israel is not definitive and is not to be Israel's goal. God does not allow himself to be bound to a form of worship or to a particular theology.' The story of the divine rescue of Lot contemplates an even more radical notion, that God is not bound simply to the parameters of God's commitment to Israel. The deliverance of Lot as one outside of the covenant shows that covenant is less than an absolute within Tanakh.450

**Faith, Righteousness and Mercy**

In an early chapter I demonstrated the many parallels on both the human and the divine planes between Lot and Abraham. The question arises as to whether the compiler of Genesis 19 maintained any fundamental distinction between them. This brings us to a consideration of the way in which the narrative explicitly distinguishes Abraham's response to the divine by the affirmation of his faith. The ideology of faith is at the heart of the story of Abraham as it proceeds from the opening crisis; 'Sarai was barren' (11:30) to the resolution; 'Sarah conceived and bare Abraham a son in his old age' (21:2) and it is highlighted by a pattern of continual delay as Abraham is kept waiting while the promises remain unfulfilled. The declaration of Abraham's faith (Gen 15:6) is

450 In his literary analysis of the story of Lot, Aycock (1983: 115) goes as far as to argue that the transformation of Lot's wife into salt represents a covenant between God and Lot. This ironic interpretation may have some value but it goes well beyond the text which lacks any sign of the usual prologue, stipulations and blessing and curse typical of covenant form. The divine mercy shown toward Lot in Genesis 19 has special significance precisely because it operates outside of a covenant commitment.
demonstrably an ideological overlay upon the story, unconnected to the immediate story context.\footnote{A striking feature of the affirmation of Gen 15:6 is that the surrounding story expresses not faith but doubt (15:2, 8). This discrepancy between the commentary and the action illustrates the way in which the ideological intentions of the narrator are carried through somewhat independently of the story line. In terms of the story of Abraham or Sarah, a lack of faith has just as firm a place in the ancestral narrative as the faith tradition.}{451}

By contrast, in Genesis 12, 15 and 17 Abraham's trust in YHWH is linked to actions, real or symbolic, that he takes to advance the fulfillment of the promises.

The absence of any reference to faith in the accounts of Lot does not imply a lack of trust but corresponds to the lack of any promises made to him. The pattern of Lot's circumstances is entirely opposite, whereby he always attains what he needs immediately. Lot has no need of a faith that perseveres against the odds since he never has anything to wait for. He moves to Canaan, to Jordan, and to Sodom by grasping the opportunities before him. Once settled in Sodom, Lot is delivered in spite of himself on each of three occasions (Genesis 14 & 19). In responding to the divine warning about the destruction of Sodom, Lot deals only with the immediate and it is the divine messengers who wait for him rather than the reverse. This pattern is sustained brilliantly to the end when sons are born to Lot without any initiative on his part. By setting the story alongside existing accounts of Abraham's faith, the compiler of Genesis 19 conveys the view that a relationship to the divine can be sustained by divine mercy as an alternative to the life of patient faith.

The affirmation of Abraham's righteousness (Gen 15:6) adds an explicit ideological understanding to the tradition of faith.\footnote{Note that in reference to Gen 15:6 later Jewish and Christian texts such as Habakkuk 2:4, Gal 3:6-9 and Rom 4:1-12 maintain the focus upon faith, while James 2:21-24 places emphasis on righteous action. From a Jewish perspective, Levenson (1993a: 57-61) rightly rejects the Christian interpretation of Gen 15:6 by von Rad (1972: 184-5) in terms of justification by faith. Such an interpretation is also imposed in the Jerusalem Bible translation: 'as making him justified'. By contrast, Jewish traditions honour Abraham's faithfulness to God through the ten trials he faced (Jubilees 17:17).}{452} The term righteousness, 
\textit{pesedah}, derives from a root meaning 'straight' and refers to virtuous living. Like the reference to faith, the theme of righteousness is also clearly imposed on the story world where elsewhere Abraham is sometimes unrighteous.\footnote{There is irony in the way the appeal made to the justice of YHWH by king Abimelech of Gerar (Gen 20:4) echoes the earlier appeal of Abraham (18:23), since now the injustice derives from Abraham's deceit.}{453} The theme of righteousness is especially elaborated in the final redaction of Genesis 18 where it is linked in the
soliloquy to the divine election of Abraham to the role of directing his household to 'do what is right and what is just (mispaḥ). The latter term which signifies the justice of a true legal process, is again linked with segedah in Abraham's appeal to YHWH (18:25). The link between these two verses provides a clue to the structure of the entire chapter which follows the pattern of the soliloquy, as set out below. In this structure, the ancient tradition of the son promise is made to serve the Deuteronomistic theme of a righteous family in which Abraham becomes a model of the Jewish father in later Israel.

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<th>Genesis 18</th>
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<td>18:10</td>
<td>Sarah shall have a son.</td>
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<td>18:25</td>
<td>Shall not the judge of earth do right</td>
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<tr>
<td>18:23-33</td>
<td>Are there righteous in Sodom?</td>
<td>18:20 How great is the outcry against Sodom.</td>
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In a number of later Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions, Lot also appears as a righteous figure but this does not appear to be the intention of the compiler of Genesis 19. In the ancestral narrative, the righteousness of Abraham is attributed to his trust in YHWH but there is no corresponding affirmation of Lot. The view that Lot does not qualify is suggested by the reference to the ridicule of the men of Sodom who reject Lot as judge over them (19:9). Lot is rejected as judge, and therefore as righteous, immediately following his offer of his virgin daughters, the moment where his behaviour is most offensive. The reader cannot overlook the way in which Lot's rejection as judge by the men of Sodom contrasts with the divine affirmation of Abraham as a judge (18:19).

The opposite view, elaborated by Coats (1985: 117, 126), is also untenable, that Lot is deliberately cast as worldly and as an unrighteous foil to Abraham understood as a model of righteousness.

454 In Wisdom 10:6, Lot stands alongside Noah, Abraham, Jacob and Joseph as one of the righteous (dikaios) among the godless ('asebhōn). This tradition appears later in 2 Peter 2:7; 1 Clem 11:1 and Pirq R. El. 25; and in the Qur'an (Surah 21:74). Alexander (1985) wrongly attempts to explain 2 Peter 2:7 by reference to the hospitality of Lot although it is clear that Lot's righteousness, like that of Noah, is attributed to his stand against the wickedness of the men of the city.

455 Here Coats follows Jacob (1974: 130) and also Vogels (1975: 140), who describes Lot as l'anti-type d'Abraham, although Vogels acknowledges that Lot is somewhat ambiguous and not totally flawed. The same view is adopted by Clifford (1989: 23b) and by Letellier (1995: 251). Helyer (1983) rightly notes that behind the righteousness of Abraham lies the grace of YHWH which, he says, overrides the disastrous results of human initiative in the lives of both Abraham and Lot.
Neither the separation story nor the following promise narrative make any such allusion. Various texts show that the righteousness of Abraham is played off not against the character of Lot but against that of the men of Sodom. Coats (1985: 117) himself recognises this in the contrast between Abraham calling on YHWH (13:4) and the men of Sodom sinning against YHWH (13:13). The significance of this interplay is emphasised by its repetition both in the encounter between Abraham and the king of Sodom (14:17, 21-24) and in the dialogue of Genesis 18.

In my view, the compiler of the story of Lot does not intend to present him as righteous nor as unrighteous. Instead, the placement of Genesis 19 in relation to Genesis 18 deliberately deconstructs the dichotomy between righteousness and unrighteousness. Through the two characters, the compiler of Genesis 19 intends to weigh human righteousness against divine saving mercy as alternative bases for a relationship with YHWH. In support of this hypothesis, note first the literary evidence. The structural focus of Genesis 18 upon righteousness is matched by that of Genesis 19:1-23 around the twin accounts of Lot’s deliverance by the messengers. The use of both commentary (15:6) and speech (18:19) to affirm the righteousness shown by Abraham is matched in

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Turner (1990b: 99) correctly affirms both the righteous and unrighteous elements in Lot’s character but he does not recognise the ‘Jekyll and Hyde’ found also in the character of Abraham.

456 Coats’ view is taken further by O’Brien who asserts that the story of Lot and Sodom illustrates the curse of Gen 12:3. O’Brien’s neat analysis of the ancestral narrative is unsatisfactory because Lot is nowhere seen to bless or curse Abraham. To assume that Sodom is destroyed because a threat to Lot is a threat to Abraham (O’Brien, 1990: 15) is to go far beyond the text and to ignore the report that the city had already been condemned (19:13). Although O’Brien (13) recognises that the rescue of Sarah shows her to be ‘an important focus of Yahweh’s power and purpose’ he does not apply the same conception to Lot who was rescued no less than three times (Genesis 14: 19), twice by the divine hand. O’Brien (14) acknowledges the birth of Ishmael as a blessing for Hagar but he holds back from a direct affirmation of the same regarding the birth of Lot’s sons (17), presumably because such a view will not fit his notion of curse.

457 The righteousness of Lot affirmed in later tradition, presumably based upon the accounts of Yahweh’s mercy towards him, in fact undercuts the contrast between righteousness and mercy presented through literary patterns in the narrative. The same is true of the study of hesed by Glueck (1967: 58) that finds mutual reciprocity, or loyalty, to be a feature of both mercy and righteousness in pre-exilic biblical traditions. Clark (1993:261) similarly emphasises the bilateral aspect. Neither study seems to recognise that the circumstances of Lot in Genesis 19 do not permit a reading of hesed limited to loyalty. Genesis 19 rather reflects the conception of divine mercy as unmerited, found in some later texts (Jer 31:3). See Whitley (1981) for a treatment of hesed that recognises a wide semantic field, including the notions of fortitude and confidence.
the presentation of mercy shown to Lot (19:16, 19). The affirmation of Abraham as right and just, using two distinct words (18:19), is matched by the repeated affirmation of divine mercy towards Lot, also using two different terms (19:16, 19). Note also that in the ancestral narrative, the themes of human righteousness and of divine saving mercy never appear in the same context. In the story of Abraham, the Hebrew term hēṣed (Gen 19:19) is used of YHWH’s relationship with Abraham only in the testimony of his servant (Gen 24:12, 14, 27). These references reflect hēṣed as a matter of loyalty and do not encompass the element of compassion indicated in Genesis 19.459

That Abraham and Lot represent a contrast of themes rather than of moral or spiritual character is foreshadowed earlier in the ancestral narrative. From the beginning, Abraham is distinguished by his altar building (Gen 12:7 & 8; 13:18), which becomes a metaphor for his loyalty to YHWH, especially when he builds an altar on which to offer Isaac (Gen 22:9).460 Abraham’s dependence on YHWH is also portrayed in his refusal to keep the booty offered by the king of Sodom, which is given the strength of an oath before YHWH (14:22-23). These accounts point towards the declaration of Abraham as righteous. Meanwhile the account of Genesis 14, where Lot’s dependence upon Abraham contrasts with the mutual status portrayed earlier, foreshadows the ideology of Genesis 19 that Lot is primarily a person in need of deliverance.461

458 The reference to loving kindness in 19:19 is integral to Lot’s speech and makes the parallel reference in 19:16 appear secondary. Lot’s speech may be an example of a narrative strategy identified by Eslinger (1990: 79) whereby the narrator avoids a direct statement of a non-orthodox viewpoint by placing it in the mouth of a character. If this is so, the direct comment of 19:16 which uses a different Hebrew term for mercy, likely derives from a different hand with a similar viewpoint.

459 The quality of loyalty is illustrated also on the human plane by reference to the hēṣed Abraham enjoys from Sarah (Gen 20:13) and that he extends to Abimelech (21:23). His servant seeks the same commitment from Laban and Bethuel (24:49). Wenham (1994: 63) wrongly introduces the motive of mercy in describing Abraham’s prayers for Sodom. The language of mercy does not appear in any of Abraham’s six entreaties where he seeks justice for the few righteous, not mercy in spite of justice for the remaining unrighteous (18:25). Nor may Vawter (1977: 230) attribute to the God of the dialogue a ‘quality of unrestrained mercy’ since both contenders assume that there are limits to divine favour. The contrasting themes of Genesis 18 and 19 are clearly differentiated.

460 The narrator emphasises specifically that the story is a test of Abraham’s obedience (22:1, 16). Soren Kierkegaard (1954) has given superb expression to the subjective experience of Abraham’s devotion to YHWH and the way in which it transcends ethical categories.

461 The nature of the distinction between Lot and Abraham that I have outlined here was partly foreshadowed by Delitzsch in his creative literary interpretation of the three messengers who appear
Thus throughout the narrative, the story of Abraham emphasises the question of human response to the divine while the story of Lot treats the divine response to human circumstances. By turning away from the idealisation of Abraham and his projection as a role model, the story of Lot, according to the above reading, returns the attention of the reader to the qualities of the God behind Abraham, especially the quality of mercy. The juxtaposition of Genesis 18 and 19 affirms that where the mathematics of justice cannot reach, the saving hand of YHWH may still operate with mercy. The scant treatment of the mercy theme in Genesis commentaries is especially surprising as the ideology of mercy is at least as important in Israelite tradition as the ideology of righteousness.\footnote{Jeansonne (1988) is one of few commentators who explore the relationship between mercy and righteousness in the story of Lot. However, my observations here, along with the literary analysis of the chapter demand a more positive treatment of Lot and of YHWH than her analysis allows. Turner (1990a: 100) recognises that Genesis 19 may be interpreted as a story of grace as much as of retributive judgement.} Both the stories of Lot and Abraham are necessary to carry forward these central values of Israel’s religious heritage.

3. Pluralism in Israel

The many examples of an inclusive perspective in Tanakh reflect a variety of practice in Israel with regard to foreign cults. Israelites probably participated in the cults of Moab and Ammon from the time of Solomon and they remained in place alongside Baal worship throughout the era of the kingdoms until the reform of king Josiah of Judah three hundred years later (2 Kings 23:13f). For those Israelites participating in foreign cults, it is not apparent that the religion of their neighbours was considered anything other than a legitimate expression of religious sensitivity. This is especially clear in Zephaniah which reports that adherence to Yahwism and to the cult of Milcom were not mutually exclusive in practice. A similar attitude is traced back to the era of the Judges prior to kingship in Israel when the Israelites were first attracted by the cult of Canaan and Phoenicia.

The special mention in Deut 23:3 of the exclusion from the congregation of Israel of the sons of Lot shows that, equally, there were Moabites and Ammonites who acknowledged the god of the Israelites and participated in the cult of YHWH, presumably in the seventh century BCE and later. However, the implementation of such an exclusion is reported only in the fifth century BCE (Neh 13:1-3). The question of Israel’s relationships with Moab and Ammon then becomes a pressing issue not for religious reasons but because of a wider cultural crisis. The children of the Jewish

to Abraham. To Delitzsch (1889: 44) the three represent the threefold vocation bringing promise (to Abraham), punishment (on Sodom) and deliverance (for Lot).
community had lost familiarity with their own Hebrew language. In this story we meet overtly the diversity between those in Israel who found identity in common community and purpose with their neighbours and those who expressed identity by clearly distinguishing themselves from others. Those who rejected Nehemiah’s reform against intermarriage with foreigners thereby placed a value on cross-cultural interchange but, as I argued earlier, this did not mean they rejected their traditional religious commitment.

The story in the book of Nehemiah illustrates the enduring disparity between the general openness of the Israelites to other peoples and cultures and the more limiting strictures of cultic law. This disparity in part reflects a dialectic within the Torah regarding strangers. While there are many repetitions of the exclusion of foreigners from the priesthood and related holy things, many texts encompass the foreigner in legal, social, moral and religious aspects of Israelite community and Deuteronomy declares God’s love for the foreigner.\footnote{463} The balance in this approach is also apparent in the ancestral narrative. The accounts of Genesis 13-14 affirm both the separation and the continued interaction of Lot and Abraham, and thus structure the relationship of Israel and her eastern neighbours. The story of Abraham in the latter chapter endorses close engagement with the Canaanites but rejects economic and political dependence. These several texts do not envision an Israelite society exclusive of other races and cultures nor do they contemplate that other peoples within Israel must conform to Israelite religion, although they are free to do so. In short, the Torah as a whole reflects the pluralism faced by Israel as a nation and accommodates to it.\footnote{464}

In his sociological analysis of religion, Weber (1964: 39-41) uses the term ‘commensality’ to refer to the determination of boundaries in social relationships. I have shown that although the notion of covenant, traced back to Abraham, determines commensality for Israel at a primary level it does not exclude broader associations on the basis of kinship, for example with the Lot tribes east of Jordan. The election of Abraham and Israel is affirmed without rejection of those outside the covenant. Conventional bible commentary has taken the difference in religion as the essential interpretive criterion regarding Israel’s dealings with Moab and Ammon, but this present study shows equal weight must be given to the common ethnicity.


\footnote{464} An article by Orlinsky (1970) treats a number of prophetic passages that some have considered to be internationalistic, and argues that a closer examination reveals a strongly nationalistic stance behind these texts and most of Tanakh. However, this article reflects upon overtly ideological texts and does not attend to the pluralism of the Israelites revealed in narrative texts.
A dialectic of covenant and mercy

The book of Deuteronomy is especially relevant to the issue of pluralism, as shown by my treatment of dialectic in the previous chapter. The juxtaposition of exclusions and inclusions in Deut 23:1-8 applies two criteria to the question of cult participation. One of these is kinship, as in the case of an Edomite: 'for he is your brother'. The other is hospitality, supposedly absent in the case of the sons of Lot but implied in the case of the Egyptians. In the absence of hospitality, the relatively close kinship linking Moab and Ammon to Israel is insufficient for their admission to the cult, which indicates that the ethical factor is at least as important as ties of kinship. In terms of these two criteria, the ancestral narrative holds an implicit affirmation of good standing for Moab and Ammon in relation to the cult of Israel since it affirms both Lot's kinship with Abraham (Genesis 12-14) and his hospitality (Genesis 18-19). The same affirmation is evident in both respects in the inclusive tradition of Deut 2:16-19, 24, 29 and constitutes a striking contrast with the viewpoint of Deut 23:4.

The thoughtful treatment by Olson (1994) of divergent viewpoints in Deuteronomy goes to the heart of issues raised by my reading of the Lot traditions, and his recognition of dialectic and deconstruction in Deuteronomy lends credibility to the reading I have advocated. Olson (127-8) explores the explicit distinction between the Horeb covenant portrayed in the central chapters (Deut 5:2ff) and that of Moab, treated in the first four and last four chapters (1:5; 29:1). There are important continuities between these covenants, both of which uphold human responsibility to observe the commandments and affirm the love and faithfulness of God. At the same time, there are significant nuances in the Moab covenant, many of which are relevant to the ancestral narrative.

Olson identifies a dialectic between the formal Horeb covenant that presumes upon the people as vassal to God and the new relationship in the Moab covenant based on God's love and faithfulness, not human loyalty. While the Horeb covenant warns against abrogation of the torah and

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465 The unconditional love of God for Israel and her ancestors is affirmed throughout Deuteronomy (4:37; 7:7-8; 10:15-18; 23:5; 33:3). However, this love exists alongside jealousy (Deut 4:24; 5:9-10), and for the future this love brings obligations. God keeps covenant and faithfulness with those who love God but destroys those who hate God (7:9-10; 12; 29:20-21). Divine compassion (raham) depends on Israel's repentance (13:17; 30:3); God will repent when he sees Israel are helpless (32:36).

466 Olson (130) finds three versions of the new covenant, expressed in worship (29-30), word (31) and song (32), each of which moves from the past of God's faithfulness, to the present of human limitation and the future of divine justice and compassion. There is a close association between the Moab covenant and the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 but the former remains dependent on a book of torah while the latter needs no intermediary (Olson: 153-4).
emphasises retribution as curse, the Moab covenant anticipates general disobedience (31:16, 29) and the need for divine mercy. The contrast is especially marked between the delight of God to ruin Israel (28:63) and God's delight to prosper her (30:9), although the wrath of God is more strongly affirmed in each chapter from Deuteronomy 29 to 32 than in the longer central section (fourteen references against seven). The demand for a heart of love toward God, by which the $\text{S\textit{ma\textit{v}}}$ sums up the Torah (6:5), is finally not a human responsibility but a gift of God (10:16; 29:4; 30:6, 14). The theme of divine love, frequent in Deuteronomy, is not found elsewhere in the Torah, and Olson (175) rightly warns that 'The effect of simplifying Deuteronomy into a flat, retributitional theology is that it erroneously sets up Deuteronomy as a foil against which the wisdom tradition, especially Job and Qoheleth, argue'.

What Olson says of Deuteronomy is also true of the ancestral narrative, that it is much more nuanced, less naïve and more compelling than past studies suggested. The dialectic in Deuteronomy fully represents the contrast between the theme of righteousness presented through the figure of Abraham and the theme of mercy presented through Lot, just as Horeb and Moab represent geographically the experience of their respective descendants. Like Genesis 13, the Moab covenant acknowledges the separation (Heb. $\text{parad}$) of peoples to their respective domains, attributing this to the God of Israel as Most High God (4:19; 32:8). In this view, the separation of Abraham and Lot occurs within the domain of divine purpose rather than as merely a human action. The same may be said of the separation Israel experienced in exile. For Olson (160), the link between the final blessings of Moses and his death outside the land (Deuteronomy 33-34) illustrates the theology of hope in the introduction to Deuteronomy, that God is present in exile (Deut 4:27-31), and that restoration will follow (30:1-10). A hopeful reading of Lot's displacement in Act Two of Genesis 19 is in accord with the perspective of the Moab covenant.

The preceding observations are consistent with the indications elaborated earlier of Deuteronomistic influence in the history of the Lot traditions in Genesis. Of special interest is Olson's interpretation (150) that the dialectic of Deuteronomy represents a polarity between the ideal of total giving and the real limits and ambiguities of human life, which could equally well describe the interplay of the stories of Abraham and Lot. Equally applicable to the ancestral narrative is Olson's conception (174) that Deuteronomy provides a model of process between centering and decentering the theology of Israel. Olson (176) finally concludes that the covenant of Moab is not just an alternative but supersedes that of Horeb. 'The Horeb covenant deconstructs itself through its inherent ambiguities, that finally shipwreck upon the curses of Deuteronomy 28, representing exile.' He finds an implicit deconstruction where the broken stone tablets written in God's hand give way to the $\text{torah}$ written by

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467 Olson's comment is especially relevant to the view of Coats (1985), discussed above, that Lot is presented as a foil to Abraham.
Moses, which was first placed alongside the ark containing the Ten Words (10:1-5; 31:26) and became the only tradition when the ark was gone. This incorporation of both the inside and the outside into the torah tradition provides a metaphor for the legitimacy in the divine economy of both covenant and mercy represented in Abraham and Lot.

It is useful here to note a distinction made by Weber (1964:55) between exemplary prophecy that may produce elitism and ethical prophecy that is more likely to produce the order necessary for a religious community. The figures of Abraham and Lot lean respectively in these two directions. The quality of saving mercy articulated in Genesis 19 could provide for Israel in exile and afterwards a foundation not found in the Abraham traditions. Mercy is also a quality which can transcend boundaries which exist in the contemporary world. The development and conclusion of Genesis 19 points to the understanding that a focus upon the God of mercy behind particular faith expressions will be important in treating the circumstances that arise in a world where we live close at hand to those who are very different from us. This leads me to concluding reflections upon religious faith in the contemporary pluralist world and the engagement between that world and the reading of biblical tradition.

4. Conclusion

At the heart of this study is my interest in the plurality of contemporary society and the boundaries that are perceived to structure the encounter between people of different religious commitments. The story of Moab and Ammon provided a first window on these issues and revealed a mixture of eirenic and hostile Israelite traditions. Analysis of the ancestral narrative showed how little Lot and Abraham are distinguished in the story world, and cast in bold relief the ideological elements in the text which now mark and differentiate so strongly these two characters. A close reading of Genesis 19 produced an interpretation of the Lot traditions on their own terms, rather than in the shadow cast by Abraham, that affirms those beyond the covenant of Israel. Studies of intertexts further clarified the distinct intentions of the compilers of Genesis 19 and together with tradition history analyses supported the view that Genesis 19 was compiled by authors other than those of the surrounding texts attributed to the Yahwist. There are many indications, both linguistic and thematic, within the Lot traditions which support an hypothesis of Deuteronomistic influence. This hypothesis is encompassed surprisingly well within the dialectical reading of Deuteronomy by Olson, from an entirely distinct discourse.

The variety of perceptions within Tanakh of the boundary that identifies the people of God known as Israel illustrates the view of Tracy (1987: 68) that no classical text comes to us without the plural and ambiguous history of effects of its own production and all its former receptions. It also shows the capacity of a religious community to incorporate within itself a plurality of viewpoint. In my view, the conception of a community boundary functions to affirm the identity of those within the community. One knows oneself by distinction from the other. A countervailing factor, equally
evident in the Tanakh traditions I have discussed and in contemporary life, is the recognition of similarities shared with those beyond one's community boundary. One also knows oneself in similarity to others. The stories of Lot and Abraham represent this fundamental polarity. The differing social constructions of Israelite identity which I have elaborated reflect the varying dominance of these two factors. The same variation characterises the encounter today of different Christian denominations and different religions. A recognition of both elements in the biblical record is important for contemporary individuals and communities whose boundaries of ideology and community are challenged by others.

In the context of such contemporary encounters, the story of Lot provides a basis for considering the character of Jewish and Christian religion today. Fundamental is the fact that the story does not deny or underestimate the significance of boundaries but grapples openly with them. The final text affirms a place in God of both Abraham and Lot. In the broadest sense, both are of the elect although different roles pertain to them. This is compellingly declared by the role of the messengers in the two stories, who represent the incarnation of the divine in human life. From my own Christian viewpoint, the story of Lot, as a symbol of divine care for those who are marginalised and alienated in religious and social terms, is not unlike the story of the life and the cross of Christ. It is significant that through encounter with the divine, both Lot and Abraham face the challenge of journey beyond the boundary of the familiar. Their response to this challenge, which structures the Tanakh stories of both Lot and of Abraham, is strongly developed in the Abrahamism of Judaism and Christianity which I illustrated in the previous chapter. The Christian gospel of incarnation expresses that even God participates in the basic reality of leaving home (Phil 2:5-8).

It is ironic that the privileging of Abraham in the three religions of the mid-east represents both an opening to universal community and a limitation upon it. The promise of universal blessing, found in the creation story, in the blessing of Abraham and in the cross of Christ is dominated by the scandal of particularity inherent in the election of Abraham and in the incarnation of Christ.468 The Jewish understanding of the exile as a means of extending the blessing of Abraham stands over against the Christian view that the universalising of the blessing occurs in the emergence of Jesus and the church in Palestine. The most challenging aspect of these opposing viewpoints is the tendency of Christian commentators to co-opt the Hebrew Bible and to impose on it an essentially Christological hermeneutic.469 In effect, all three religions of Abraham have given greater power to

468 Jewish reflections of the tension between universalism and particularism are offered by Magonet (1991: 136-148) and by Levenson (1996) who asserts that ancient Israel has a conception of peoplehood that was not determined by the particulars of race or culture.

469 This is illustrated in older critical commentaries by Delitzsch (1889: 45) who interprets the divine messengers' sharing a meal with Abraham and Sarah as a sign of the intimacy of God in the
the story of the parting of Lot and Abraham, representing the gulf between them and other faiths, than to the deliverance of Lot, symbolising a universal common humanity under God.\textsuperscript{470} In this context, the acknowledgement in Jewish tradition, that through Ruth and David, Lot also shared in the fatherhood of the Messiah (Gen R. 51:8; TB Naz. 23b) is a significant observation.

The polarity between the exclusive and the inclusive is treated usefully by Leach (1983: 67, 76). He describes the story of divine favour to Abraham in response to his obedience (Genesis 22) as an icon of orthodoxy, upholding as it does the notion of mediation by sacrifice. By contrast, the direct access of the individual to divine favour, portrayed in Lot who is outside of the established mediation, is for Leach an icon of subversion and a sign of the arrival of a new time. The language of orthodoxy and subversion well expresses the dialectic in the ancestral narrative, provided one recognises the relativity in these terms: subversion from one viewpoint may be orthodoxy from another.

\textit{Biblical reading in a postmodern environment}

The postmodern viewpoint, I believe, offers new potential for fruitful discourse in the realm of religious faith. The advent of the modern era, with its secularisation of scholarship and scientific methodologies, initiated a revolution in biblical studies by legitimating the critical examination of texts and interpretations. However, as many references in this present study show, the critical studies of the last two centuries have been unduly bound by a confessional stance, illustrated by what I have called Abrahamism, and constrained by a rationalistic conception of correct and true understandings waiting to be proven. A discussion by White (1991: 18) of the notion of 'normalising', found in the writing of Michel Foucault, provides a useful means of distinguishing postmodern interpretation from modern. The postmodern mind foregoes the modern disposition to evaluate the other in terms of one's own norms, for the sake of listening to the other with open minded engagement.\textsuperscript{471} Foucault (1988: 328) dreams of a new age of curiosity which expresses

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birth of Isaac and of Christ and as a prefiguration of Christ in the flesh. Delitzsch overlooks a similar explanation for the meal shared with Lot.

\textsuperscript{470} The attention to divisions is well illustrated by Paul's treatment of Ishmael and Isaac (Gal 4:22-31), which takes for granted the prior separation between Lot and Abraham. Paul chooses to quote Sarah's words of separation (Gen 21:10), ignoring the divine words of affirmation of Hagar that follow.

\textsuperscript{471} It would be wrong to imagine that 'the post-modern mind' emerged only in the late twentieth century. Saxonhouse (1992: 185-236), in her treatment of the birth of political science in ancient Greek thought in terms of the fear of diversity, demonstrates how Aristotle in the third book of the
care not only for what is but for what might exist as we look at the familiar in a different way. With such a sense of curiosity and responsibility, this study has looked afresh on the story of Lot and Sodom and on Lot’s relationship to Abraham. I have affirmed what lies beyond the strictures of orthodox covenant theology in the spirit of Lyotard’s principle (1985: 59, 87): ‘one must maximise as much as possible the multiplication of small narratives’.

A postmodern outlook brings into view the possibility, indeed necessity, of engaging in religious discourse with a clear recognition of the diverse faith stances of particular individuals, without predating the discussion on the need to agree. Such a discourse distinguishes between the experience of people and the dogma of belief and recognises that the truth of the changing words we use to express belief is never adequate to encompass the truth of diverse human experience. Without assuming an agreed rational basis for debate, we are free to engage in personal encounter and dialogue which itself will reveal the possibility of demonstrating the true and untrue. I am here advocating a dialogue, informed by the best scholarship but not limited by it, that embodies a witness to personal and corporate faith, which in my own case is Christian. Such a dialogue I believe to be legitimate and indeed evangelical in an orthodox sense. It acknowledges what already is relative between those of different faiths, leaving open the question of what ought to be.

As Turner (1994: 17) rightly observes, the issue of relativism may seem to disturb faith. However, that which disturbs faith need not be an enemy of faith, as illustrated in the response of religion to the killing of over thirty people at Port Arthur, Tasmania, early in 1996. The grieving community of diverse cultures and faiths were consoled in a religious service embracing the three religions of

 Politicae departs from the Platonic and Socratic emphasis upon unity to give equal consideration to diversity and to the particular.

472 Contrasting conceptions of such a discourse are evident in the dialogue between Neusner (1991) and respondents from the three mid-eastern faiths.

473 To this extent, I lean toward a pragmatic approach, such as outlined by Rorty (1982: 162, 166), who affirms that truth can be treated not as theory but as a practical matter. Dialogue must recognise the contingent nature of the starting points and different goals on either side. Pflacher (1989: 110-112) has a similar viewpoint, noting that rational dialogue between cultures or religions does not require an Archimedian point of reference. While there is a relativistic aspect to this process, we need not conclude with Gellner (1992: 84) that ‘there is no revelation’. He himself affirms (76) the existence of transcendent knowledge which, in my view, amounts to the same thing. It would be sufficient for Gellner’s case to reject the assumption of privileged revelation as a starting point without rejecting the possibility of revelation per se.
Abraham and beyond, carefully coined in the universal symbolism of God as shepherd.\textsuperscript{474} That service did illustrate Turner’s point (1994: 10) about the commodification of religion. When society faced, most starkly, profound moral and spiritual questions, the functional value of a religious observance for human living weighed more heavily than rational considerations of orthodoxy. However, it would be wrong to assume an opposition between the functional and the rational. Through the reading of texts from various scriptures, with full regard to the social dimension of language and meaning, the service showed how traditional wisdom and relativism may walk hand in hand.

The service at Port Arthur illustrates the approach to pluralism taken by Milbank in his analysis of theology and social theory, particularly in his emphasis upon truth through narrative. For Milbank (1993: 426), truth is not a representation but a relation to events - a participation. Milbank (6, 380) acknowledges that (Christian) theology can only legitimate itself within a sociological discourse through a lived narrative, namely ‘the continuation of ecclesial practice’ which exhibits a distinguishable Christian mode of action. In his encyclopedic historical examination of sociological treatments of religion, Milbank critiques (65, 133) the claims of sociology to encompass religion and asserts his intention to ‘restore in postmodern terms the possibility of (Christian) theology as a metadiscourse’.\textsuperscript{475} Milbank (5) finds in Christianity a notion of peace as the sociality of harmonious difference which stands against the theme of original violence characteristic of both antique thought and that of Nietzsche. ‘Christianity is uniquely different in denying ultimate reality to all conflictual phenomena’ (262).

Milbank identifies clearly with a Christian viewpoint but distinguishes himself from various other theorists. He pursues his discourse (2), acknowledging the contingent character of theology as an historical construct and rejecting positivist approaches in both theology and sociology. He concludes (70) that the antimony of both the social and the individual is basic and can be mediated only by a narrative approach (89) which does not expect to trace behaviour and events to fundamental influences. Narrative for Milbank (263) provides a single mode of knowledge without recourse to the Kantian distinction (followed by Ricoeur) between natural science as explanation and human science as understanding. Milbank affirms (147) that the logos at the heart of Christianity makes thought inescapably Christian. However, over against the emphasis of MacIntyre upon

\textsuperscript{474} The service perhaps illustrated the ‘constitutional religion’ advocated by Gellner (1992: 91-93), being ‘relativistic in its use of symbolism, ... but absolute in the serious pursuit of earthly truth’.

\textsuperscript{475} Milbank accuses sociology, as conceived by Berger, of becoming a meta-narrative of its own, a new metaphysics. In his view, sociology can give only an historical account of society and religion but not explain religious behaviour in any categorical social terms. Similarly, he rejects Nietzschean suspicion and nihilism also as only another mythos (1993: 2, 279).
dialectic, Milbank (328) finds in the *logos* encouragement for a rhetorical habit of mind, giving priority to opinion, testimony and persuasion. Milbank (385) has a more optimistic view of dialogue across differences than Lindbeck and Frei and rejects as a new foundationalism their privileging of the Jesus narratives as a correct performance in identifying God. Instead, Milbank (388) seeks for a true Christian metanarrative realism in the whole story of human history, interpreted in the light of the gospel events.

Dialogue between those of different faith and different scriptures raises far-reaching hermeneutical questions and gives rise to the question whether it is possible to develop a universal hermeneutic. Following his very comprehensive treatment of a great variety of hermeneutics, Thiselton finally advances his notion of a pastoral hermeneutic.\textsuperscript{476} Using the analogy of a pastoral encounter, Thiselton (1992: 605-6) notes the inadequacy of a purely descriptive approach (fitting words to the world), whether in reading the biblical text or the personal life situation.\textsuperscript{477} He asserts (556f) that a hermeneutic that reduces a text to historical reconstruction courts a danger akin to that of pastoral theology of objectifying the present case. Thiselton (546ff) also finds inadequate the 'Reader Response' theory of Fish that sees meaning not in the text but in the response of a community to it. Such a view leaves no possibility for the text to reform such a community from the outside. This pastoral hermeneutic represents an affirmation of the illocutionary force of a text alongside its propositional force, by which Thiselton (615) affirms the capacity of a text to address, promise, commission, decree, praise, celebrate, pardon, or authorise. For Thiselton this means fitting the world to the word, a movement that decenters the present situation of the reader, as of the client in a pastoral encounter.

The notion of a pastoral hermeneutic is attractive for the context of religious encounter as it recognises that any discourse among adherents of faith engages much more than ideas detached from human life. Such an hermeneutic is in harmony with the narrative emphasis of Milbank. It offers a model of communication in which the dominant mode of the professional involved is listening rather than declaring, and it is oriented to the goal of the conversation, regardless of the starting points of those engaged. I would characterise this goal as to affirm and to hear the other. Such a goal takes conscious account of the dynamic of power in the relationship but, as Thiselton (589) and Placher (147) assert, this does not require the listener to be in neutral regarding the

\textsuperscript{476} Another comprehensive treatment of a variety of hermeneutical approaches is provided by the Bible and Culture Collective (1995).

\textsuperscript{477} The notion of conversation as a postmodern hermeneutic is advanced by David Tracy (1987: ix, 93) who affirms that there exists in every authentic conversation an openness to mutual transformation.
outcome that follows the affirmation and listening. Thiselton (330) thus allows that pluralism can be approached with a practical wisdom that goes beyond rules and method. I agree with him (612-3) that although hermeneutical pluralism is inevitable it does not prohibit moves towards a metacritical ranking of norms by those willing to operate outside their current life world. While he believes (616-7) that the cross of Christ provides a centre for a universal horizon, Thiselton acknowledges that it does not represent a closed system and is a challenge to every context-relative view of its status.\textsuperscript{478}

Through dialogue with those beyond its own world, a particular faith is rightly accountable to other viewpoints as it subjects its heritage to their examination. So Placher (1989: 147-8) affirms that a primary motive of such dialogue should be to test one's own views, rather than those of others, and Tracy (1987: 34, 98) asserts that understanding should encompass all interpretations arising from a full conversation among all interpreters of religion. An openness to universal scrutiny seems to me to be the only alternative providing a fruitful discourse in a world where an a priori basis for rational discussion can no longer be agreed.\textsuperscript{479} For the discourse of Jews and Christians, Olson (155-6) finds appropriate approaches in Deuteronomy. With reference to three covenants in the Deuteronomic stream, those of Horeb and Moab and the new covenant of Jeremiah, he candidly affirms that Jews and Christians have an equal status, dependent on teaching, and that neither has reached fulfilment of the Jeremiah covenant vision. Olson (4) notes that Deuteronomy provides a centre but accommodates pluralism; it points the church toward teaching by persuasion, not dictation and toward faith offering hope not idealism. It is my contention that the story of Lot, read in the context of the ancestral narrative, exhibits these same features.

\textsuperscript{478} Culbertson (1991) contributes to the discourse by advocating a minimalist Christology.

\textsuperscript{479} This approach does not accept the limitation of Christian discourse, as Lindbeck (1984) argues, to those with a Christian worldview.
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